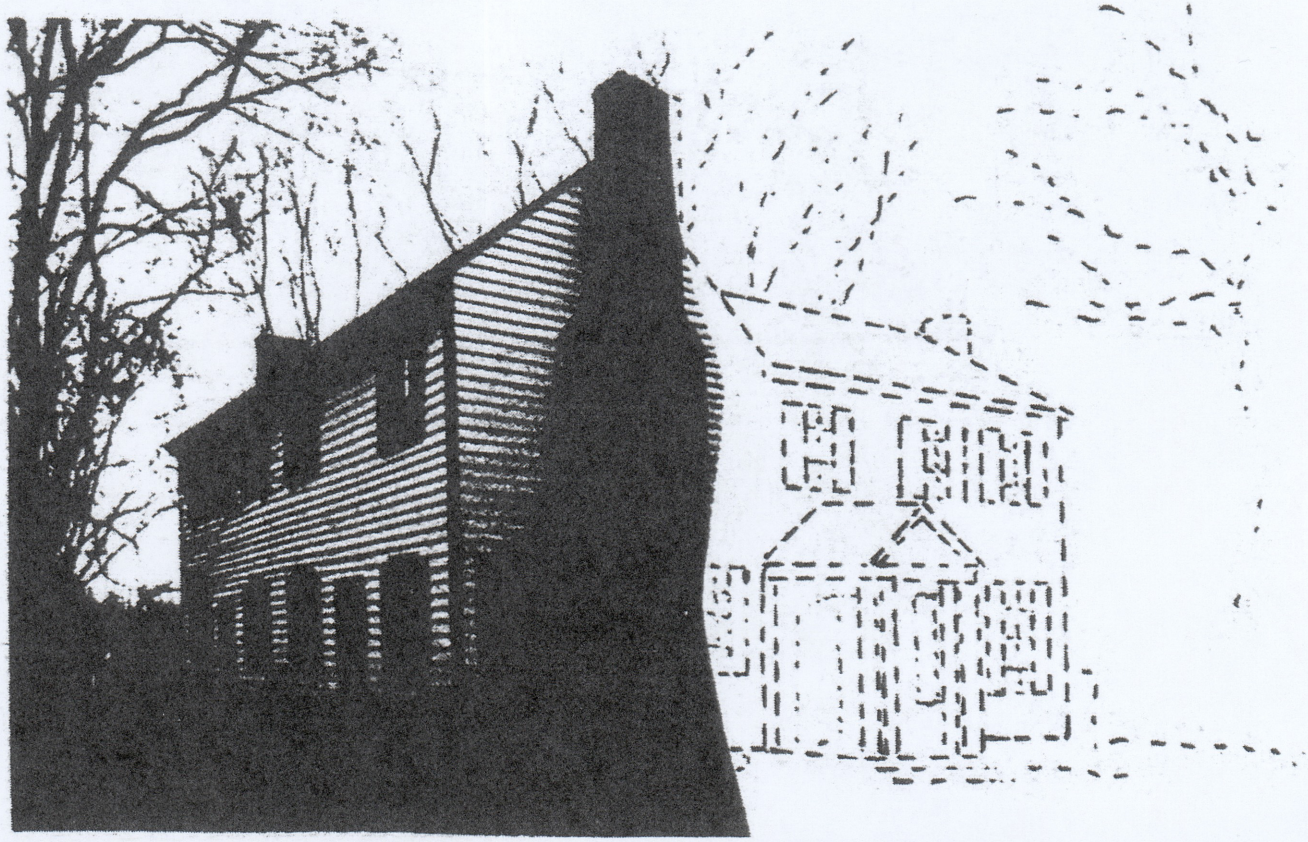
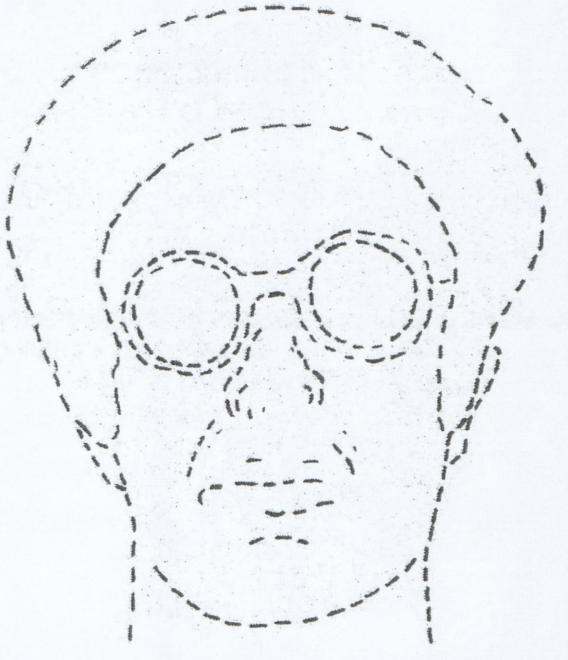
Pictorial Impressions

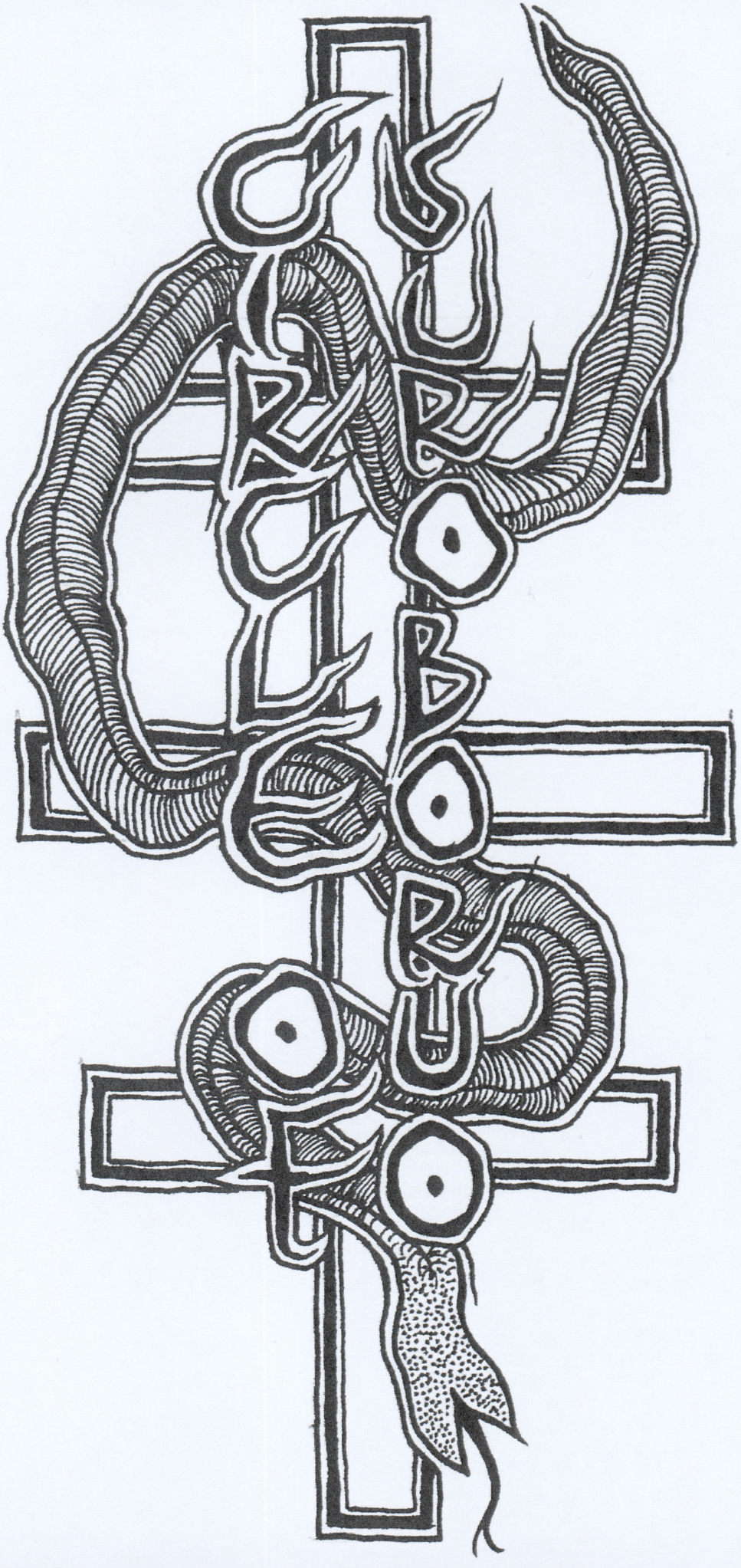


"You expect too much from Black Metal"
-M.N

He is right you know. I do. More than any other musical genre I can think of, BM feels steeped in such a rich tradition and code of conduct that to expect anything less than total adherence and reverence feels like sacrilege. Yet, at its heart it is simply a musical style, a blip on the radar, and mere entertainment. To treat it with such a high level of respect feels completely idiotic and pointless when placed up against the perils of the world. I immerse myself so deeply in music and in turn become enraptured by its spell. It begins to pump through my bloodstream and becomes the very air that I breathe, every little thing I look at takes on an ominous tone informed by the sounds heard the night before and without my realisation I become crippled by it. Trapped within its confines. Once I reveled in such weakness, allowing oneself to get wrapped up so deeply in something felt special, it felt like I was given a gift that others failed to receive. BM for so long gave me more than I could give it back. Recently however, BM has faltered, or perhaps I have faltered in my ability to see past the filth-stained veneer. BM is miserable and hateful, and immersing oneself in it can be dangerous, it is intolerant and bigoted and too much exposure to certain frames of thought severely damages your own outlook on life. Yet, it isn't those aspects which concern me, I feel that I am capable of compartmentalizing certain elements within myself to such a degree that I can comfortably listen to something while still retaining a small semblance of self once it has been removed for long enough. I, like anyone else, am susceptible to influence, but I still know myself. What has faltered is the modern nature of BM and what it represents as a whole. Everyone knows BM is a façade. A charade. We know the people who create such art rarely live the very life that they portray. We have made peace with this fact and turn the other cheek when overtly obvious examples arise. But there exists a falseness today that feels almost intolerable, and I am not talking about people's daily lives, ones where they work regular jobs, have partners and children, and feed their pet dogs each morning and night. That has always existed and will only continue to do so. The falseness surrounds the way in which BM is consumed, commodified and commercialised. It has clearly lost sight of its spirit. For it to penetrate society to such a degree where it can reach otherwise vapid and mindless consumers must mean it has lost its once sharpened edge of dangerous volatility. BM is now just another cute collector market geared towards "batch drops", "updates", "limited editions" and "collection updates". I fully appreciate my involvement in this, this very zine has championed such bands and labels, given glowing reviews to highly coveted records and generally just pandered to such a mentality. The band I am in feels cornered into such a market to a degree that is almost untenable. I like to believe we do it for the right reasons and have attempted to circumnavigate the intolerable aspects of the underground, but when I stare into the mirror of truth the evidence feels far too damming to deny. Modern BM sickens me, its emptiness and lack of integrity makes for terribly mundane and boring music, music produced *by* vapid people, *for* vapid people. I know this is a wild generalization, and certain acts (many of which featured in this here issue) belie such a statement, but inbuilt into BM's very fiber is a tedious element that simply does not sit well with me any longer.

"A work is finished when we can no longer improve it, though we know it to be inadequate and incomplete. We are so overtaxed by it that we no longer have the power to add a single comma, however indispensable. What determines the degree to which a work is done is not a requirement of art or of truth, it is exhaustion and, even more, disgust."
-E.M. Cioran




OUROBOROS

NE- To even attempt to unravel the mystery that enshrouds the vast body of work that Circle of Ouroborus has created is an ominous task indeed. That task is even more gargantuan to an outsider with no understanding of your native tongue, Finnish. Instead of clarity I am faced only with a deep-rooted feeling, an ingrained sense of what the band "could" be about. This offers a dream like essence to your work; it is something to get lost amongst. I thank you for this opportunity to discuss and expand upon some of the ideas in these pages.

By now, people should know of your band, so no typical introduction is necessary, however I would like to start somewhere close to the beginning. Circle of Ourobours has existed for over a decade and a half now, in that time one might expect stylistic changes to occur, and while you could argue that CoO has metamorphosized over the years, it could also be argued that it has remained very close to the original conception that was heard on "Shores" and "Star/Rise". To me at least, this highlights that there was a clear and concise vision when the band was started, is that an accurate summation? Is there a precise formula, if you will, for creating the work of CoO? A concrete theme that has remained ever present across the years?

CoO- Of course it is hard to recall all these ideas, visions and feelings which were present when we started this band but I will try my best.

Musically the main idea was in its all simplicity to mix Post Punk and Black Metal. Lik's first album and especially the song "Hate to Be Human" was one strong influence, and an idea to make a Joy Division cover in a more harsher manner was coiling in my head before CoO. Rauta was starting his musical journey with Verivala etc. and I didn't have the slightest idea how to sing (correctly), so we were more or less going on a fishing expedition with our first releases. Soon the right frames started to materialize what comes to the guitar sound and overall character of our music, but of course we wanted to keep this spontaneity and the blurred nature of our music. Because we started from the nothing, it was easy to move to different directions - for example, these acoustic albums like "Star/Rise" and "Veneration" came very easily. I can also say that Rauta - and me too to some extent - works in strong bursts: sometimes there are long dry seasons, but also very intense periods of creativity. That's why it's easy to find these different stylistic confluences what comes to our certain albums. So, I would say that our music holds a very instinctive nature in general.

- What comes to lyrical themes, I have always kept nature and especially Finnish nature close to my heart, and therefore there are already songs about leaves and junipers in our first releases. The second strong theme has been philosophy. I'm not so into magic and all its systems, I prefer the works of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, especially back in the days. Nowadays the spirituality has become the third beacon in this triangle, so this nature theme has taken a more mystical and symbolic form. But all these themes intertwine around some cardinal questions about humanity: Who am I? What is my relationship to the world around me? What is my role and place in this cosmos? How to become a better man? Wonders of life.

NE- Over the last year or so I read Albert Camus's "The Plague" and Jean-Paul Sartre's "Nausea", both filling me with a strange sense of wonder, disenchantment and, strangely enough, hope. Those feelings accurately reflect the emotions experienced when listening to the body of work of CoO. You mentioned "how to become a better man", for me that is an intriguing goal to strive towards. Black Metal and the underground in general revels in hatred, disgust, self-pity, depression and just an overall succumbing to the pitfalls of humanity, for someone to entertain the thought of becoming better seemingly flies in the face of the very spirit of Black Metal. Yet, I think that sums up a lot of people's trajectory through life, it certainly can be applied to mine. The juxtaposition of wanting everything to fall apart, fixating on the misery while simultaneously striving for something more. Spirituality is often seen as a black and white mentality, but I sense it penetrates far deeper than that for you. Can you talk about when these senses became heightened and you started looking up from the depths below in the search for more? What are some of the struggles you have faced along the way and how have you overcome them?

CoO- I appreciate those books you mentioned a lot too, and what I have learned from them is that you have to hit the bottom to rise up to the surface. Or maybe not hit the bottom but you have to wander in the deep to understand totally this vast ocean called universe, life and yourself. Negativity, destruction, darkness and other elements that are usually connected to Black Metal are important things in life but they aren't everything. You have to know your shadows

to understand your light, if I may play Paulo Coelho for a second, heh. Of course, in the beginning CoO and I were more driven by darkness and negativity - songs like "Streams to Depression" speak for themselves - and it was somehow charming and enjoyable to wallow in your own emotional depths and romanticize them a bit, but the older we got, the more varied and holistic the vision became.

So when I speak about "becoming a better man", I don't speak about super positive self-help mantras but knowing and accepting yourself totally - with all the demons and the angels. Nowadays I'm a more self-confident and stable person, and it doesn't feel awkward to write songs about positive feelings and love - for example "Armon Keitaalla" album is all love songs lyrically! And I would say that CoO is a quite positive band both lyrically and musically. As said before, we were searching only darker notes during our early years, but now there is this weird dream-like tenderness and light-heartedness present. Of course, the darkness is there too, but in a more symbolic, softer form. I have maybe mentioned Eino Leino in every CoO interview and I won't make an exception now either - this Finnish symbolist's and new romanticist's (1878-1926) poems paint a very vivid and appealing picture about the Finnish state of mind, where all the sharp corners of life are softened by velvet darkness. For me the impervious darkness isn't the most dearest moment but that blue minute when the last rays of light are dying in the horizon but still the night is just awakening around you. Different kinds of limbos and borderlines, these get me going.

What comes to my personal life and its struggles, I have to say that I have lived quite secured and "easy" life. Of course, I have had my own ups and downs and for example surviving through a nasty blood disease last Autumn gave me lots of perspective to life, its wonders and the things I love and keep close. But in my opinion, you don't have to face concrete darkness to understand it. Mind is a fascinating world to travel and explore, and when you spend enough time with yourself and listen what your consciousness and subconsciousness have to say to you, you can travel far. I haven't practiced any meditation or something like that, but I run a lot, and when you're jogging through the woods, thickets and mist and let your mind just stream freely, you can find yourself from very dark places.

NE-A friend and I had a long conversation about your music, he suggested you were searching for "joy" and I was leaning towards the endless balance between light and dark, I guess it all intermingles in there in some shape and form along the way.

Understanding that music can't be broken down and packaged neatly in little labelled boxes is often confronting. Some listeners require that definable quality, those easily controlled sub genres that suit their mood. Listen to Beherit when I am angry, Xasthur when I am sad, maybe Lifelover if my drug dealer goes missing, that kind of thing. CoO defies this, I actually discovered "Shores" very early on in my BM initiation, and I think in doing so it helped shape my overall vision of what BM "could be", when I hear people say they don't understand CoO, or ask wonderingly how you guys ever got classified as BM etc, I think they are missing the point and actually feel sorry for them. Your body of work traverses every element of the essence of being, and if that isn't intertwined with BM I don't know what is.

Artists commonly say they do their music for themselves and themselves only, but if that were the case, they would just sit in their backyard strumming a guitar like my neighbor does. The act of releasing music into the public, by its very nature, highlights an awareness of the notion that others will listen to it. You have seemingly ceased releasing music with English lyrics, which makes me wonder how someone from Finland experiences your music compared to someone who only speaks English. When you say that "Armon Keitaalla" is love songs, you will forgive me when I say I am surprised, that one being your more openly BM sounding recordings! How aware of your audience are you when creating or releasing music?

CoO- Yes, the big question: "what is Black Metal?" One common categorization is that All Satanic music isn't Black Metal, but all Black Metal is Satanic. I agree with this more or less. And if you think about the lyrical content of CoO, it comes more or less clear that we aren't your 100% Black Metal band - of course this idea about accepting the dark side of your mind is quite close to this Luciferian state of mind, but still I'm not feeling totally confident while talking about Satan.

Musically I don't see any contradiction - if we think about how diverse Black Metal was already in the mid-nineties (Ulver, Mysticum, Forgotten Woods, In The Woods…

and these are just Norwegian bands for a start!), CoO drops to this box quite easily at least in the case of some of our releases. But still it feels a bit awkward to talk about us as a Black Metal band. Maybe because I know people who are totally into the ethos of Black Metal, it would be too easy to use that same label for us. But luckily, I don't mind how people are describing our music, or if they are baffled what words to use - I'm as baffled as they are! - And so we can concentrate on this topic about the relationship between us and our listeners. Yes, I started to use only Finnish in our lyrics some years ago - maybe somewhere in 2012 or 2013 - because it felt that I couldn't express my more and more abstract and symbolic visions and ideas in English anymore - and my English wasn't ever so brilliant after all. Of course, this decision shut one important door before our non-Finnish listeners, but I don't know if that stopped them to buy or enjoy our albums. And it seems that still the main part of our audience is coming somewhere else than Finland and that is a bit sad because - yes, I sound an egoistic, self-sufficient bastard now - I think my lyrics are pretty good and they have something to give to the listeners. Of course, I could make harsh and simple translations of them but somehow I have shunned that decision - although there were translations of my Finnish lyrics in my lyric book "Visions of the Dead Serpent" (2015). It's a bit shady ground for me. Maybe I want to keep some sort of mysticism covering us? Or maybe I am just a lazy geezer? Can't say for sure, to be honest. - But the audience is there and of course we release our albums to them - too. CoO has always been a very holistic band what comes to albums. Not only the music and lyrics are important but the whole package: the cover art, inlays, even the format. So although we could just record our songs and leave the tapes to our cupboards and drawers, we want to take things to the end - at least I want to hold the physical album in my hands and observe it as a half-creator, half-outsider. And because I have taken care of the artwork of many our albums, that's another reason to release albums as aesthetic wholes to a wider audience.

But when I'm writing my lyrics I don't think about these listeners at all - and I bet Rauta feels the same while writing the music. I don't speculate in my mind if they understand me or if they misunderstand me - damn, even I don't understand my lyrics sometimes. I must admit that I'm interested in people's reactions and I read the reviews etc. eagerly but that's because I want to know how many different ways people can interpret our doings and it's quite revealing sometimes. But otherwise we just do what we want to do, how clichéd it sounds.- And about this interpretation/misinterpretation: I think that true art is always clothed in mysticism. Of course, great artists can also make obscure and abstract things very clear and approachable, but for me art has always something unexplainable and distracting going on. And I don't mean that you could just throw words in air and say this is art - there must be always a vision present but you don't have to polish it and open it to the receivers in its full form. Usually that vision isn't clear for me either - but it is always there.

NE-You are right, you could argue back and forth forever regarding the foundations of Black Metal and still be no closer to an answer. Perhaps that is part of the appeal, the endless search for some semblance of meaning in life and existence and death which reflects itself in the music of Black Metal.

CoO- Yes, and I have quit this game of categorization a long time ago. I wrote hundreds of reviews for one Finnish webzine back in the days and did my share of labeling music - somehow it is needed but in the end they are just words. Like they say, "writing about music is like dancing about architecture". But you're right about that endless search which is important after all. And I also like how Black Metal is usually connected to words like "pure" and "true" but still the stylistic variance is so wide. There are bands who sharpen their vision an album after an album (and get bashed about how they repeat same pattern again and again) and there are bands who stretch the borders all the time - and I think both these paths are equally justified as long they are walked with an honest and pure heart.

NE- Do you actively follow Black Metal still? Have you noticed any shift in quality over the more recent years? It feels like the rate in which new bands and records are appearing has reached critical mass and is now imploding in on itself. In turn, CoO has slowed down immensely, where you once released countless recordings per year, we are now treated to one CoO release per year, is this any sort of protest against the current wave of excess?

CoO- Yes I follow, but not so much than before because so many other genres have

come to the picture, for example I have been fascinated by Psychedelic Rock for a couple of years. Also Jazz, Noise, Industrial… Lots of things going on in my stereos, but still a good Black Metal album has a place in my heart. This year Malokarpatan, Vaal, Serpent Crest, Hail Conjurer, Cénotaphe and Armagedda have rocked my boat in the right way. But I haven't been thinking about this quality/quantity dilemma so much. Of course, stylistic cycles keep their turning (maybe faster than ever), and maybe the field is more varied than ever, but all this hasn't had any effect on our doings. What comes to our more slowed down release frequency, well, life has happened. We both are family men who have a full-time job, and I guess that it's just reasonable that there are longer silent periods after 18 albums, heh. Also, the fact that Rauta quit with his Kuunpalvelus label made the releasing albums a bit more complicated. But don't worry, we are not quitting, and we have a few ready albums in our back pockets - some of them are very old, some more recent material. They will see the light of the day when the time is right.

NE-I consider CoO part of that "essential" era of the underground, when labels such as Northern Sky and Cornucopia unashamedly released records and tapes that sounded so removed from the expected. 2007 was a truly special time and I feel like it is largely overlooked now. Do you see a difference between releasing music and the way in which it is distributed and consumed now versus back then? I don't want to romanticize lost days, yet it does feel like something went missing along the way somewhere.

CoO- Ah, the glory days of Northern Sky, Cornucopia and Winterreich too… I guess everyone had lots of passion back then. Things were made from a scratch - for example, our ambient/BM works "Maailma Kohoaa" and "Maailma Uppoaaaa" and "IPSOS" EP had very impulsive creative processes - and these labels were more than willing to realise and release our visions. And the fact that these labels were located thousands of miles from Finland made its own charm to it. Just a couple of e-mails and the magic started to happen! So yes, the whole process is maybe a bit more "professional" (not maybe the best word to describe it but I use it anyway) nowadays, and to some point I miss those days when all was so new and fascinating. For example, I would like to make some harsh and spontaneous demo tapes now and then. But if something has got lost along the way, I think that is just natural. And the progress goes always forward and upwards with time, not to another direction.

NE-You have done quite a few split releases over the years, in fact you have done multiple splits with Roman Cross and there was similar plans to do multiple splits with Urfaust (which was subsequently released as the "Old Ghosts" LP). Split releases, while having a long held tradition in BM are often much maligned, and tend to be treated more as an introduction to a band someone might be unfamiliar with, or a competition which the listener feels compelled to make a judgement on which side is better. How do you go about choosing which bands are most appropriate to share a split release with? Do you attempt to work together with the other band to create a more cohesive piece or is it more a matter of both bands doing what they are known for and in turn that being presented? What is it about a split release that you feel still remains important?

CoO- Well, in our case these split releases have been concrete epitomes of friendship and spiritual/aesthetic bond. All these bands have been our long and trustful fellows, so it has been just natural to hook up and see how our music will work in this kind of shared format. Sometimes we have tried to make this kind of a cohesive piece as you mentioned, for example in the case of Crooked Necks and especially Somnivore splits we wandered further from our main core consciously to find a common ground with the other half of the split - and these have been fruitful journeys, especially "Golden Blood" includes some of my favourite ones from our song catalog. The split with Urfaust can be considered as some sort of an introduction, because we were just in the beginning of our career - although our side is quite scattered, "Dream of Death" was recorded already during our "Shores" sessions and the "In the Forest of the Horned God" (as "Northstar and "Death" on "Old Ghosts") was just a drunken, improvised campfire song recorded in my sauna's changing room, hah! But the rest of our split releases have been more or less possibilities to use some of our unreleased songs or make some shorter bursts of music. And sometimes things have happened by accident - if I remember right, first there were plans about the split release between Cénotaphe and Cosmic Church, but Cosmic Church couldn't make it so we stepped in and so Cénotaphe/CoO split was created. - But yeah, it would be cool to make more coherent wholes, when there would be more co-operation and changing of ideas in the air. To take this conversation to the

sidetrack a bit and give you one example of this kind of action, there will be an Absolute Key (my noise/BM band) / Utarm split LP out through Death Hymns during this Summer, and for the cover art I made a cut-a-paste collage first which I sent to Sindre of Utarm and he added his own brilliant marker pen art on it. That was an interesting and definitely eye-opening creative process for both of us.- And you asked for my own personal favourites too! Well, the first one is always an important one, and I think "Auerauege Raa Verduistering" (the title is a mixed combination of Finnish and Dutch/German words by the way) has some of the best material from Urfaust, so it was a good thing to share some wax with our spiritual brothers. Also, the harshness of both Roman Cross splits appeals to me, and that was a nice chance to use some of my teenage goth lyrics from 1996, hah!

NE-You mentioned your other project Absolute Key, and earlier you said "writing about music is like dancing about architecture" which made me think about your zine "Kaleidoscope". Did you do any projects before CoO? In addition, do you see these other endeavors as all part of a larger overall picture, or are they individual statements? Are you conscious that external projects might in turn reflect on CoO in some way, and if so, do you strive to keep some level of continuity between everything you do? Or do you use these projects to break free of any restraints CoO may place upon you?

CoO- Well, there weren't any real projects and bands before CoO, apart from Mental Terror which was a death/thrash band formed by me and some of my friends in Lappeenranta in the beginning of the millennium (I took care of the vocals - I guess you can find some samples from Internet). So it was love at the first sight with CoO, hah! - But what comes to this idea of "everything is connected to everything", you have to remember that I am not a musician - I can't play any instruments (ok, now with Absolute Key I am learning to play some synths etc.) and also my singing skills are, eh, quite limited. So, it was - and still is - just natural to express myself in other ways - through magazines, art, lyrics etc. And all these formats and creations are definitely parts of a bigger picture, a picture of me. I don't think that you could detach yourself from the art you create, at least for me art is always very personal. But same time art isn't presenting me completely without any twists and corners. As I said before, art is always veiled in mysticism, and in a same way I am not totally naked and visible in my own creations. I have usually used a metaphor of a lantern while talking about this topic. The flame inside the lantern is your personality, soul or how you want to call it, but the light of this flame isn't ever glowing in its true form but through the glasses of the lantern. And that's the point in my creations too. It's the same 'me' making magazines like Kaleidoscope and Arise!, writing lyrics for CoO and creating chaotic Black Metal noise in Absolute Key, but this 'me' is always showing in a different light. - So I don't consider these non-CoO activities as possibilities to break the chains of CoO (damn, CoO doesn't have any chains!) but just different ways to express myself. Maybe the only way to think these activities as a tool to break free is that my role in CoO is rather limited. I don't write any music (I played drums on "Night Radiance" demos, though), so for example Absolute Key is giving me more artistic freedom to work as a more independent actor.

NE-I can fully appreciate your point of view and stance. I have only ever done vocals in the bands I have been involved in, I distinctly remember once being told to stay out of a band conversation because I "wasn't a musician", that statement has stuck with me and in a way been a driving force to push forward in spite of my limitations. Not being a musician offers a unique opportunity, but also limits your possibilities. You are at the mercy of others and need to be ready when they are, I have found this way of working interesting. Like you, I have various other outlets and I treat them as different branches of the same tree.

However, you obviously have a connection with Atvar, and I imagine he tailors the music in a way that he knows will compliment your vocal stylings/patterns/tones etc. In that way you are a musician because you influence the music without even playing an instrument. Does the process of writing a CoO song revolve around Atvar doing the music and sending it to you to record vocals over, or are there processes beyond that? Is there a period of to and fro where ideas are fleshed out or do you each have your own part and you both know that part and play it? Have you ever been faced with something you thought was beyond your capabilities? Some of the 2017 period CoO albums feel quite different and I imagine that period to have been an interesting one to face?

CoO- Actually I don't know how much Atvar thinks about vocal lines or my singing abilities while writing music. In fact,

our style is quite straight-forward. As you guessed right, he just sends the tracks to me and I make my own vocal arrangements. Sometimes he "reserves" some parts for guitar leads but usually I have a total artistic freedom to do what I want: where to use screams, where clean vocals etc. But everything isn't carved in stone after all: sometimes Atvar adds his own vocals to the mix or replace some of my parts with his lines. And I'm totally fine with this, because we want to keep the concept of CoO as loose as possible. There aren't any strict roles or patterns in CoO. For example Atvar took care of the vocal duties in "We Come through the Sun" (from "Golden Blood") and I think that song works absolutely brilliantly with his singing style. Same thing with "Kotiinpaluu" LP - it's Atvar doing all the vocals, and his softer approach suits well these mellow songs. - And although our working method sounds a bit too simple (one makes the music and another one makes the lyrics and vocals), I can't ever underline how naturally our ideas click to each other. It's maybe a bit exaggerating to say it's almost a telepathic bond but sometimes it feels like that. I or Atvar has a flickering idea of something and when I or he suggests it, another one of us has already been thinking of it too. - So, although we don't see each other so much and there can be quite long silent periods, the bond is always there. - Lyrically I also can more or less decide where to take them. Sometimes there have been exceptions, like in the case of "The Lost Entrance of the Just", where Atvar wanted to have a more occult approach. I'm not so into these things than him - as said before, my approach is more philosophical and poetic - but it was interesting to research these topics (Tree of Life in kabbalah, qlippothic dimensions etc.) and shape my own views and perceptions. Also the case of "Armon Keitaalla" - the idea of the lyrics concentrating on love came from Atvar and I started to think about my relationship to it: love between my family members, my daughter, jealousy, physical love, spiritual bonds etc. And the whole contradiction between harsh Black Metal and love lyrics… It works well. - You mentioned limitations. Yes, they are there, but luckily, I'm not a musician and therefore I'm not aware of them all the time. Of course I try to do my best and figure out how to get the vocals going with the music in the best possible way, but same time I don't have a rule book in my mind that tells me what I can and what I can't do. If I have the feeling, the atmosphere, the whole spirit created by the music, the lyrics, the mysticism in me, then it's enough. Feeling doesn't have - and must not have - limitations. It carries you over the physical limitations, at least in my case. It's better to sing from your heart and in a wobbly note than perfectly but same time mechanically. Or maybe I'm just defending my lack of talent here, hah!- But of course there is progression, on every level. We have walked a long way from our early years, and because we haven't become a one trick pony and dared to stretch our limits, there are more aesthetic possibilities for us to choose from nowadays. But I would like to think that we haven't wandered too far from our roots after all. The same flame is burning in these newer releases as in "Shores" for example. The light of the lantern have remained the same but the variance of the lantern glasses have grown bigger.

NE- Earlier you mentioned that all BM is in essence Satanic. Now I am sure many could argue back and forth on this topic, but I will leave that for the reader to decide for themselves. Your lyrical approach, as you said, is more poetic and philosophical, do you ever find that politics play any part in your approach to lyrics? I have heard it said that "the personal is political", and that in some way politics informs every level of consciousness. Obviously BM has a strong connection with National Socialism, but I am not talking about that here (although feel free to comment on that particular strain of BM if you wish), but I am interested if the political climate has informed your approach at all over the years, as we have experienced varying different climates in the lifespan of the band?

CoO- Maybe I'm splitting beans here but first we have to define what is 'political' and 'politics'. Are we talking about action on a social level, do we need a certain party or ideology behind it, do we try to affect on receivers or are we just bringing forth our opinions? At least in our case we are not preaching about anything crystal clear. Of course, it is important that our music makes some sort of waves in receivers' minds, but we don't have any certain message we want to transfer straight to our listeners. Some of my lyrics can be seen somehow political, but same time they can be seen as philosophical and poetical too: lyrics about the social relationships, an individual's role in this universe, theories about freedom, determinism etc. Also many of my lyrics are dealing with nature, especially Finnish forests, but although I personally support green values a lot, I don't include so much

politics or public participation as for example Hexvessel does (which I appreciate a lot).- And although I'm interested National Romanticism in Finland (during the late 19th and early 20th centuries with names like Eino Leino, Jean Sibelius and Akseli Gallen-Kallela), and you can find shades of this in my lyrics, this fascination is miles away from National Socialism. No sympathy from me to these idiots. I have my Burzum CDs in my shelf and they stay there, but if you start to make Black Metal just a plain tool or channel for your own political issues and opinions - be it left or right, then you're doing something wrong, at least in my opinion. Yes, art and other musical styles can be political, but I want to keep my Black Metal somehow magical, out-worldly… Maybe it's a bit of a naive stance but this is how I feel it.- So, the personal is political, if you want to see it that way (you could for example argue that my decision to write my lyrics only in Finnish is a political decision somehow), but if you ask from me, my political opinions aren't relevant what comes to Circle Of Ouroborus. Of course you can always cloak your message in metaphors, symbols and poetry - like these Finnish National Romanticists did when they were trying to promote Finland's independence under the Russian rule - but still it feels a bit weird and alienating to mix politics and Black Metal.

NE-It feels like society is forcing people within it to pick a side, left or right, as if it is as clear cut as that, no grey area. Recently we have seen bands or labels donating to different movements, even when their music has remained outside of politics or been totally a-political up until that point. This in turn creates a boycott of said bands or labels from the more outspoken segments of the underground and paints everyone associated with the same brush.

I still see music as an exploration along with a form of entertainment and distraction. It was/is a place you could go to escape the petty dramas of everyday society and submerge yourself in a different world. It feels like people taking stances and getting on their soapbox about everything humanizes BM almost.

You said it feels weird to mix politics with Black Metal, but you can't deny that in order to listen to BM you need to have at least made peace within yourself towards the more rogue aspects of it's history. Even if you don't subscribe to that way of thinking (NSBM) you at least have to acknowledge it exists, and I feel that entering into BM you are almost tolerating its existence. For me, rebelling against this side of BM would be like joining a group of dog lovers, who walk their dogs and make calendars of their dogs etc, but you don't actually like the nature of dogs, and instead want to change it to a cat lovers group instead. How do you rationalize within yourself the stigma that BM has around it? because it feels like things are getting worse and people are trying to call everyone out for the smallest of infractions.

CoO- Yes, of course I'm aware of NSBM, but I wouldn't agree that when you embrace Black Metal, you embrace automatically all the branches of it. Black Metal is very personal and intimate genre after all, and everyone of us creates our own relationship to it. So if someone wants to combine nationalism and Black Metal in his/her mind, that's his/her business. That just isn't my thing, and I gladly stay out of that territory. We aren't talking about "just music" here - there's is always more than that in Black Metal, and in that sense you have to take the whole package what band offers, be it Woods Of Infinity's flirtation with incest or some other band's dreams of Hitler.
And if we take a wider glance to this all, the world of Black Metal needs more than a regular person to enter it. As said before, National Socialism is just a branch you can dismiss, but if you can't ignore the main corpus. You have to accept the idea of evil and darkness in yourself, but again I would say the point of view matters a lot here. Evil for example: do you see it as concrete evil, or spiritual, or something else? Call me a humanist cat lover among the dog lovers (I have two cats, by the way!), but who really wants to be evil in the purest sense of the word? Venom and other first wave bands took things to the extreme but I guess it was more or less because of the shock value, and of course some bands want to sound "evil", but true evilness? Evil is in us, but I'd say the goal is to be the master of this, to be aware of every side of yourself, not to glorify evil. That's why you can't find the word 'evil' in Circle Of Ouroborus' lyrics. There are dark and agonising topics and I have gazed into the abyss more than once while writing COO lyrics, but again it's more to be conscious about yourself, not diving headlong to darkness. And as I said before, more I become self-conscious, more I can write about other topics than these "typical" Black Metal themes. There is darkness in everything, but also light. But again, if somebody wants to dwell in

evilness and filth, that is his/her choice. So Black Metal is a very diverse phenomenon, but same time also very absolute. You sense the certain aura when you listen to Black Metal despite the musical nuances of it. There is the main root, where all these sprouts are rising. But what is that main root, that's a difficult question? Satan perhaps? At least not Hitler, hah!
I'd like to comment your thoughts about humanizing Black Metal, which is an interesting topic. However, I wouldn't use the word "humanizing" here, maybe "mundanizing"? I think I have made my stance clear that I want my Black Metal cloaked in mysticism and aesthetic shroud, and all these political outputs just make things too… ordinary. Some witty person could say now that this- my opinion, is also a political output, but oh well. Of course we all have our opinions and views about this society but is Black Metal a channel to bring these opinions out? We are returning this theme of mysticism again - although Black Metal is a tool of being aware of yourself, you also need to distance yourself and wear some sort of a mask when creating Black Metal. Black Metal is a ritual, and you can't face these spiritual wonders and powers as yourself. You need a mask, a role, and although mysterious band photos, corpse paints, cloaks etc. haven't ever been present in Circle Of Ouroborus, I would say that I'm not my daily me in Circle Of Ouroborus - it's a poet, or a seeker of hidden knowledge, the figure that lives in me and is one part of me, but again, it's not the whole truth.

NE-There is a strong sense of tradition present in your approach. Even though CoO isn't "traditional" in the commonly accepted term. I too much prefer things to be somewhat traditional, I guess it's a rejection of what the world is morphing into, what technology has offered us and how we don't necessarily need to embrace it. In someway this puts you at odds with what is happening in BM now, the "mundanizing" of BM, bands which sound extreme, look extreme, but at their core have nothing of substance that the listener can grasp but it is all very marketable. A deeper message or meaning may very well be present, but when there are no interviews, no song titles and no lyrics…all you are left with is a feeling based on the sonic destruction and the presentation. CoO encompasses a far deeper resonance due to the coagulating of a vast history of influence and inspiration. Have you attempted to embrace the modernity of BM at all? Can you find any benefits to the way music is recorded, produced, manufactured and distributed now as opposed to when the band first started out? I know you touched on it a bit earlier, but I am interested in your views on how you balance the expectations people have of the band (labels for example) against your own desires? (an example is that we get asked for high res transparent scans of our logo for releases, and I have no idea what that even is or how to do it!)

CoO- Again I'm getting a bit semantical here, but I feel that we aren't so "traditional", at least in a musical sense. We have always walked on unknown paths, as outsiders. Of course, there are enough elements in our music that at least some of our releases can be labeled as "Black Metal", but still we aren't following any musical tradition of Black Metal - or "untradition" neither. I respect both approaches - keeping things as basic and traditional as possible or looking for new territories all the time - if the vision is honest and pure, for example it's interesting to follow how some bands just sharpen and sharpen their vision about "Pure Black Metal" with every release. But I think these paths aren't for us. We began already from quite unconventional starting points and I think were still drifting from one territory to another. There is this method of sharpening/researching of a vision visible in our discography - that's why there are these sets of albums that might sound a bit similar compared to each other - but after a while we usually continue our journey onwards, or return back to familiar themes. But this never has happened because we want to be experimental, that all just happens naturally, almost unnoticed. I understand bands that have one strong vision and a certain style or method to concretize it, but that road isn't for us.

But I guess you meant more productional traditionalism? Well, we are some sort of artisans in my opinion, there aren't any fancy studios or other tricks behind our sound and music - I have recorded many albums' vocals in my living room for example. One of my friends once mentioned that he would like to hear a COO album which somebody professional would produce "in the right way", but I guess that day will never come, heh. We haven't changed our ways of working, we have that same style where we try to keep as many strings as possible in our own hands. Of course, I can't talk behalf of Rauta who is handling the writing, playing and recording of our music, but what comes to vocals and artwork for example, things have remained the same. And I feel you

about those transparent scans etc. - although I have made tons of zines and cover arts, I still use mostly scissors and glue. And this is not because I would like to keep things "true" or "old school" - this method works best for me and I like the result so why change anything?

You also mentioned the relationship between audience's expectations and our own desires, and I guess it doesn't come as a surprise that we do what we want. Luckily all the labels we have been worked with have been totally understanding and adjustable with our visions and ideas - it seems that they know what we are and want to have us because we are what we are, not because they want to change us to something else. We don't want to have die-hard releases, no five different colours of vinyl… just those elements and details what are needed to accomplish our vision, and the labels have been always ok with that.

NE-Speaking of labels, you have worked with a lot over the years. Besides Rauta's own imprint Kuunpalvelus of course, do you have a firm set of standards that a label must adhere to? I know you mentioned above that they must be understanding and adjustable, along with no desire for multi coloured editions and illustrious die-hard editions, but beyond that are there requirements you look for? Right now, there are a lot of labels popping up all over the place, and some come and go without leaving much of a ripple, your recent full length "Viimeinen Juoksu" came out through His Wounds which is a label I had never heard of before. I imagine after working for yourselves via the Kuunpalvelus label it may have been a challenge to trust your work to others? How have you dealt with that transition between having full control on some releases and letting go of them a little bit?

CoO- Yeah, there has been a small legion of different labels connected to our doings, but as I mentioned in one of my previous answers, back in the days it was easy when all these labels - Winterreich, Cocainacopia, Northern Sky, Ahdistuksen Aihio etc. - were friends of us so it was more about common support than real business. We shared the same vision about these things, and if there was an idea about something different - for example, this bag/7"/tape combo of "IPSOS" - it all happened in a total understanding. There were some side steps like these two albums on Handmade Birds label, but also that was because R. Loren, the main guy of this label, was a big fan of ours and he showed big workmanship with his efforts - and it was our little side step to the edges of a limelight in the form of a bigger promotion, some interviews and even reviews in Pitchfork, haha! The same thing has happened with His Wounds - Nikos is a great guy and he understands what COO is all about, so the collaboration with him has been very smooth.

So, after the ending of Kuunpalvelus we haven't lost control what comes to our releases, there are still many reliable and close labels like Final Agony who don't try to push us to the directions which aren't for us. And of course, we have received many offers about reissues, split albums etc. from left and right, but I guess we have settled down a bit during the last years. We aren't so productive than before, and we aren't so eager to walk every path and chase every rabbit we bump into. Can't remember if I mentioned this before, but personally I have a little itch to take some artistic twists and turns in the form of EPs etc. that would differ from COO's main core, but luckily I have Absolute Key for these ideas nowadays.

NE-Can You elaborate further on these "little itches" regarding artistic twists and turns? It feels like we are at a stagnant stage in music consumerism, with the height of difference being a fucking Obi Strip (no offence Dani!) on a release. You have done some private releases in the past, and even the idea of a truly private release these days feels redundant, with everyone wanting to show off their latest acquisition (or the artist themselves incapable of not receiving public praise for their work thus making it public anyway). Where do you see physical releases going in the not too distant future? Before it was the threat of downloads looming, now the threat feels more like homogeneity and oversaturation?

CoO- Well, those are just my own little desires, I miss the times when we were a bit more spontaneous and came up with releases like "Maailma kohoaa" and "Maailma uppoaaaaa". The world of COO is still so wide and ever changing so it would be refreshing to challenge us a bit more after all these years. But of course it is also important to keep things natural and flowing, not just make these twists and turns because of them. And there have been little experiments and journeys now and then, for example I'm glad we made "Alttarimyllyt" albums (2015) which combined acoustic and metal songs.

But I don't have so clear opinions about this music consumerism you mentioned. We

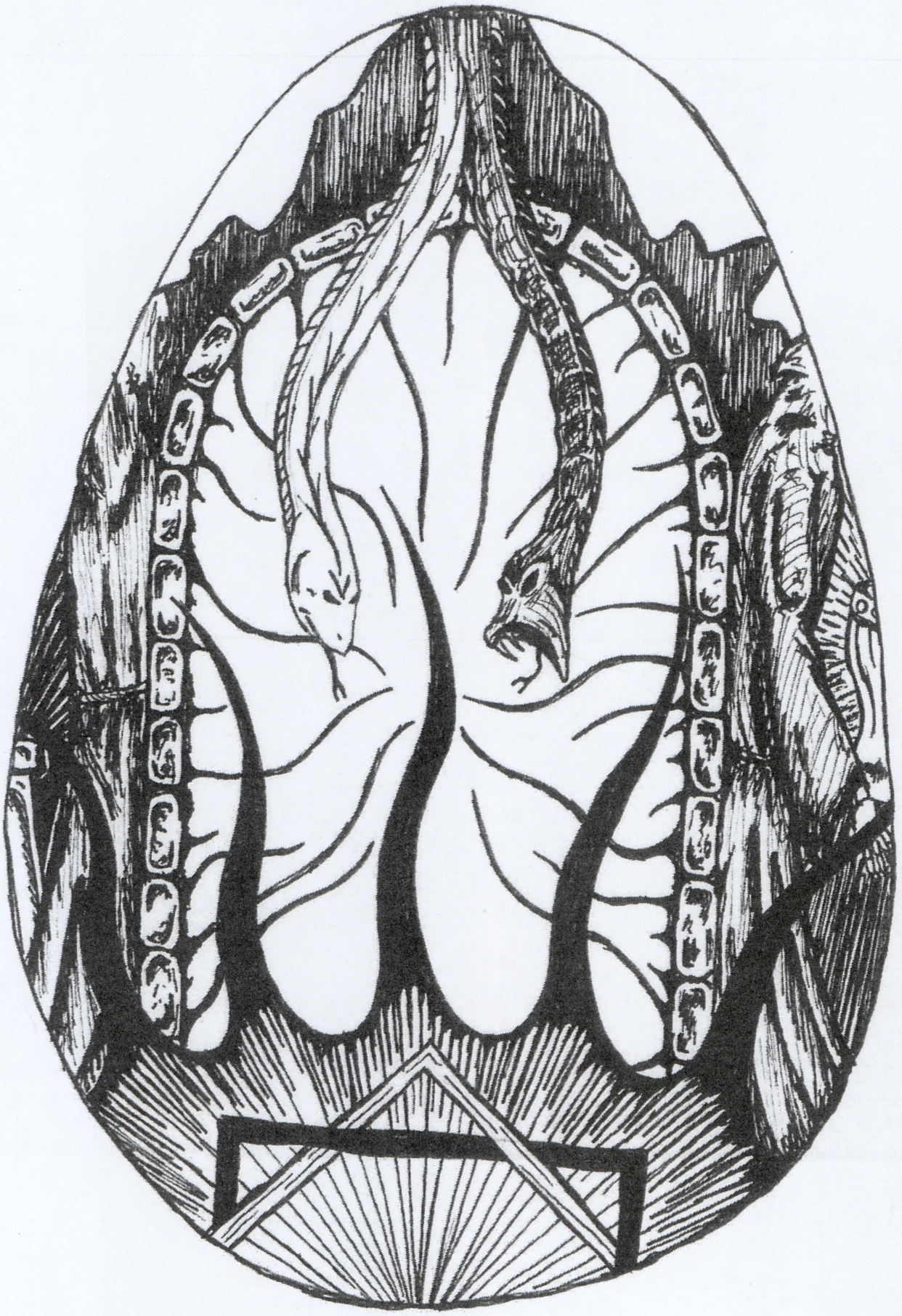
got our own share of criticism back in the days when we were "too" productive, and people were nagging why we are releasing so much material - especially when all of them weren't so peculiar and first-rate in their opinion. But I would like to think our discography as some sort of a sketch book, a path to clarify our vision, and therefore all these releases are equally important steps.

And yeah, there were a few private releases - they were put out when these "circles" were tighter and more coherent (although I wasn't ever so keen to form or be part of these kinds of "inside clubs"). But nowadays these private releases are indeed a bit artificial and don't serve their purpose anymore. It's weird to find people selling albums that have been dedicated to them and have their name on the album - and even weirder to find people buying these, heh. But each to their own - at least I know after that whom I don't dedicate my releases anymore. So although I cherish the physical releases and it's always a satisfying moment to get a new COO album in your hands - to give the end to the whole process - it's just plain matter after all. Maybe I'm sounding too Coelho here again, but usually the journey is more rewarding than the destination. I have noticed this especially when I'm making magazines; when the zine is out, then it's out and I rarely get back to it. And what comes to your comment about oversaturation of physical releases - well, if a band thinks it's worth of releasing and a label thinks the same way, who am I to argue against their decision? I believe the diamonds will shine through shit after all, and many bands lose their interest after a couple of releases. But when the band has a strong and unique vision, they are hopefully more patient to work with it and refine it with time, and in that case for example the dense releasing pace is justified.

NE-Can you see a time when you won't want to play the type of music that CoO is known for anymore? I remember saying to myself when I was in my mid 20's that I couldn't think of anything worse than being 40 and still playing music. Yet here I am, as active as ever. Of any band out there, CoO is one that could seemingly stand the test of time as it is able to evolve and grow or contract and shrink as required. It could be the perfect vehicle of expression for many years to come!

CoO- This has been a strange ride indeed, and I have never imagined - at least very consciously - that we could continue with COO this far. As I have mentioned earlier, many things have happened very spontaneously so there has been also a possibility all the time that we lose the flame during the process. There have been silent periods but then someone or something has breathed to the embers and the fire has started to burn again.

But I wouldn't say it has been an age thing. Of course I have grown as a person and many personal incidents have changed me but I can still recall that same guy who was writing lyrics and wailing his lungs out over 15 years ago. The urge to understand this world and yourself is endless, and more you reach the limits more they run away to the horizon. And in some cases the hunger has just grown bigger, for example I think I have learned many lessons about writing the lyrics during the last five years so sources of the lyrical side of COO and the world itself show themselves to me clearer than ever before. Naturally I can't talk behalf of Rauta - maybe he is feeling that the inspirational well has drained and he is ready to call it quits tomorrow! Who knows. But personally I think COO has still something to give to this world and especially to us. This snake has truly fed itself and shed its skin so many times so why to break the circle yet?



NE-We are approaching near total saturation point for Raw BM, people seem fatigued with each new band that appears on the scene and a general apathy seems to be washing over the underground. Lamp of Murmuur could easily fall foul of such apathy, with people lumping you in with the other masses of useless acts, however, your music transcends the typical formula for "solo" BM acts, there is a level of composition and skill that is often not found on projects within the Raw BM field, and Lamp of Murmuur has fucking riffs, tons of them. You are still a relatively new project, when did you first discover BM? What was the initial appeal and at what stage did you want to start playing BM yourself?

LOM- It's true that in the current times raw black metal has entered a state of almost absolute saturation, with hundreds of projects spawning everyday with very similar imagery, sound and themes.

I think the breaking point towards the "distinctive sound" of Lamp Of Murmuur was in the second demo , when I started experimenting with song structures and riffing , and changed the programmed drum machine (an element also preferred by these new waves of raw Black Metal acts). I started to practice playing drums and that radically changed the sound of the project.

Black Metal for me was a discovery very early in my youth, it was a paradigm shift as my musical education was surrounded by progressive rock acts such as Genesis, Yes and such. All of a sudden, I discovered the world of extreme and fast music thanks to a childhood friend, and weekly visits to cyber cafes to download the classic albums we all know from Mayhem, Darkthrone, etc ... made me go further into those realms. I haven't looked back since then.

The primitive rage, the aggressive sound, the fast drums, everything was like a revelation for me after years of listening to 15 min prog rock epics.

I started playing Black Metal, always by myself, about 6 years ago. It has been a relatively short time executing this style, but I'm glad to see how I've matured and found somewhat my own identity when approaching the genre.

NE- Speaking of politics, BM has a long-standing affiliation with politics in certain factions of scene. Where some bands and fans feel politics has no place in BM, others argue that to enter into BM is to also enter into a scene of intolerance, hatred and ignorance. What is your stance on this topic? Have you faced any backlash regardless of your political views due to simply being guilty by association?

LOM- Personally, I have no interest nor will support the evident contradictions behind endorsing certain extremist ideals for the sake of evil and hatred while glorifying its inherent philanthropic connotations and basis. I feel politics can have their own place in Black Metal, if displayed in a cohesive and committed fashion.

I've faced certain predicaments regarding people I've worked with, I conceive paranoia linked to "cancel culture" a counter producent activity and a useless waste of energy in which people put a lot of attention to.

NE-What are the primary influences for Lamp of Murmuur? It feels like we are entering an era where new bands feel indifferent towards the "old guards" of BM and are instead influenced by the modern wave of bands who exist almost parallel to the first few waves. Where do you source inspiration from musically?

LOM- I fall a little bit into this category of being influenced mostly by newer bands rather than old ones. I find myself listening and enjoying bands like Dai Ichi, Black Cilice, Maleficentt or Ifernach quite a lot. That's not my only source of inspiration though, I really enjoy the sound of older bands like early Satyricon, Forgotten Woods, bands from the Polish circle like Thunderbolt; or Katharsis, to name a few.

I'm not only limited to Black Metal, as my guitar tone and approach to riffing is often inspired by death rock and post punk bands like Christian Death and Sad Lovers and Giants. I'm preparing a special weird cover as a homage to this non-metal influence for the full length that will be revealed around October, if everything goes well.

NE-To follow on, what about lyrical influence? Do you need to be in a specific frame of mind to write lyrics or is inspiration everywhere in this rotten fucking world?

LOM- My lyrics vary a lot regarding the themes I approach in every release.

But my most recurred themes are mythology, symbols, the oniric realm, human perversion, suffering and my personal experience with pain and disease.

In particular, lyrics in demo V (The Burning Spears of Crimson Agony) were specifically written about an incurable, but treatable condition I deal with since my youth.

Personally, I don't see myself restraining me toward specific "niche" themes that are associated with Black Metal.

NE- Can you appreciate the overall apathy that seems to be seeping across BM towards bands like yourself? People will form an opinion on the band based on your Demo covers, corpse paint photos and band name alone, before even bothering to listen to you. BM has always been the impenetrable fortress of the underground, filled with intimidating elitists and total know-it-alls. Was there any trepidation on your behalf when starting the project, were you surprised by the interest you received?

LOM- As you said, underground Black Metal has always been a special phenomenon in music. For me, it has been the medium between the voice most obscure regions of my psyche and my conscious self. It just resonates with me in a way that no other genre has ever did with me in a lot of levels.

To be honest, I was and I'm still surprised at the increasing reception with every release I've made. When starting, I just wanted to make an homage to everything Black Metal has (and still) signified in my life. A homage to all those hours listening to all kind of bands, while starting to feel this uncontrollable urge to write material of my own.

My sole intention while performing this style, is to decipher what these feral voices are urging to manifest to my conscious self. My writing process is mostly improvised in all instruments, so it's all a very "irrational" approach. If the result ends up being well received, I'm grateful, but my main intention behind this project will never be recognition. It will forever be a personal exercise on hatred and perversion.

NE-Today, bands have almost wholeheartedly embraced modern technology, social media, streaming services and online stores to distribute their music and make people aware of their projects. Some, me included, are yet to fully appreciate the impact technology has on the underground, doggedly refusing to upload their music or create bigcartels, and trying to rely on the online platforms as little as possible. Lamp of Murmuur feels like you have somewhat embraced the modern age, can you talk a bit about this approach and why it feels natural to you? I feel like there is a generational divide perhaps, but maybe it is more mental than age?

LOM- To me, the Internet and social media, is a dynamic tool. And as a tool, it's value relies in how one chooses to use it. Despite having no social media presence other than my bandcamp site and an email address, I understand why some (mostly new) musicians feel the need to take a more visible approach. More when it's about one-man bands in isolated places of the world. It could definitely serve as a bridge between those people and new audiences, new music for them to listen and support, collaborations to make.

We read zines and books about how it was in the old days, with tape trading and letter correspondence. The internet simplifies this task a lot and helps to create new circles of musicians who collaborate and support each other. On the other hand, it's obvious how this simplification can be seen by some as a devaluing factor in this craft that we call Black Metal.

But until now, all interactions I had as Lamp Of Murmuur via social media with other musicians, labels and such has had an encouraging effect. I can witness the intense passion that moves these people, and I get filled with an intense desire to continue creating and contributing to the worldwide Black Metal scene.

NE-You have a strong relationship with Death Kvlt and Not Kvlt records, are the similarity in label names purely coincidental or do the labels work in collaboration in some way? How did you first get in touch with these labels and what is the benefit of having a label instead of self-releasing your stuff?

LOM- The similar names are pure coincidence. The labels have never worked together and are separate institutions inside Black Metal.

I've met DK when he basically started the label, and we've developed a camaraderie that lasts to this day. I've seen his imprint grow from small 20 tape batches that weren't selling, to full 200 LP runs gone in seconds. He has worked hard in his 3 years, and I feel he absolutely earned and deserves the status he's holding in underground Black Metal right now.

I've met Matt from Not Kvlt via internet relatives with which I interacted and was introduced to him. We started talking pretty often, and he was the first person to ever listen to any music from Lamp of Murmuur. His support and confidence since the first minute has been crucial to the developing of this project, and I'm glad to have developed an extraordinary friendship and music relationship with him.

There are a series of logistical problematics that impede me from self-releasing my own stuff, despite an initial desire to do it. I've had an imprint in which I self-released some of my projects, but only distributed them regionally. To have both Not Kvlt and Death Kvlt's support since the beginning has been of enormous help. I'm working with other labels anyway to release some other stuff, like splits in the near future, or Demo V that has already come out on vinyl via Black Gangrene from Portugal.

NE-There is a vague sexual element to your song titles, "Romance" and "Midnight Lust" are some examples. Sex is often covered in BM in far more perverse ways, anti-romantic even. Is sex a theme in Lamp of Murmuur? If so, how have you tackled it differently than the typical "Rape the Nazarene corpse of Mother Mary" band?

LOM- It is a theme indeed, but in a more "serious" way if one wants to put it that way. Maybe "serious" is not the word, but it's not for the sake of violent shock value.

My interest on sex, romance and other sensual affairs comes from how these spheres in human experience can drive one's motivations during existence, and how they condition judgment and rationality.

How this primitive instinct of reproducing led to the awakening of a wide array of varied, sometimes perverse practices in search of immediate pleasure and satisfaction.

To sum up, my interest comes from how sexual impulses predate human reasoning to the point of confusing or distorting reality.

NE-For me, the corpsepainted image is still an intrinsic part of BM and its overall allure. A well-done photo with decrepit corpsepaint goes a long way towards creating a feeling and essence. It does get lambasted by those who may have grown out of it, or those who don't understand it. I read an issue of "Funeral Maelstrom of Hate" zine where the editor does a whole piece on the importance of corpsepaint, and my appreciation of it grew from there. What is the importance of corpse paint to you and the project?

LOM- It's an integral part of Lamp Of Murmuur as a project. Despite being labelled as ridiculous by certain more "mature" or "intellectual" Black Metal listeners, I feel it's importance to imagery and spirit are invaluable. Reading about native cultures in my region, one can see certain patterns in these developing societies, where face paint was an integral part of their organization and identity, a symbol of spirituality, and a banner of sacrifice and might during war times.

It serves as a means to deprive oneself of recognizable human gestures, to nullify any blink of humanity and to link one's image to the energies of the dead. To me corpsepaint is part of this uncompromising display of feral and primitive energy that is manifested while writing or interpreting genuine and honest Black Metal.

NE-Has Lamp or Murmuur performed live? Is the live format important for the project? BM to me rarely translates well across to the live performance, perhaps it is due to its need to exist more in one's feelings and mind than the physical form right in front of you. In many ways live shows humanize BM and that is in contrast to the essence of a lot of BM.

LOM- To date, Lamp of Murmuur has never played live. There where intentions to play live this year, that were pummeled by the CoVid outbreak.

Live format is not something that is crucial for me, but I feel an interest to explore. Possibly next year at certain selected places and dates.

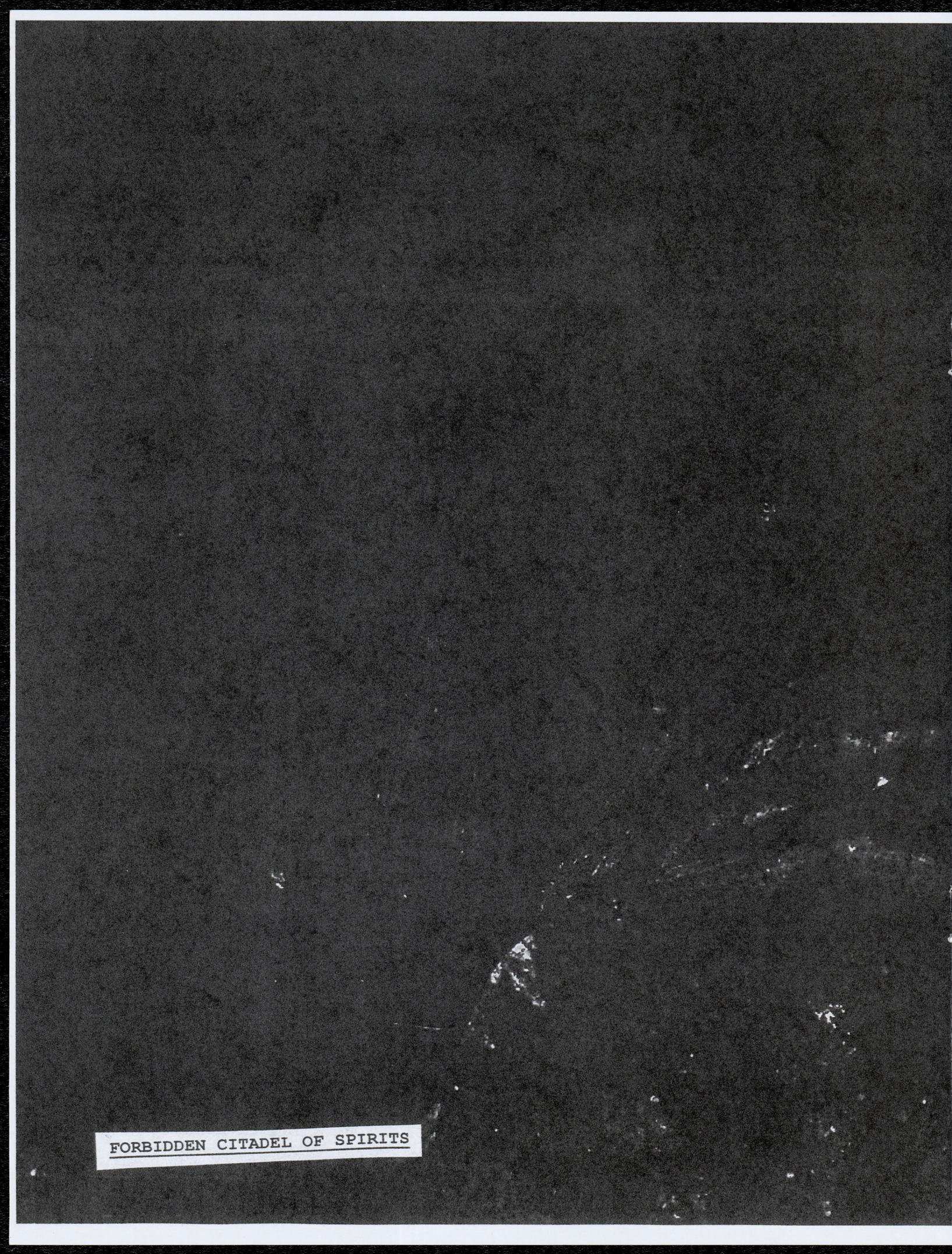
I agree partially with you, but the thing that made me change my mind was that last year I was able to witness a new level of music performance intensity, while having the opportunity to catch the Portuguese master, Black Cilice, in live concert. I'm still in awe at the raw ferocity, the intensity and the majesty of that showcase of Black Metal excellence. One of the greatest musical experiences in my life.

If Lamp Of Murmuur ever performs live, it will be in a context in which I would be sure the band can offer similar levels of sonic intensity.

NE- The world feels like it is in a bad place right now, but maybe that is what the media wants us to think? BM feels like the perfect soundtrack to the demise of civilization, do you feel more inspired when the world crumbles around you, or does it make no difference?

LOM- It's the constant circle of destruction and reformation that has been predating human history since it's inception, I feel. Empires and civilizations crumbled and fell silent to the hands of time, and sooner or later I'm sure another disruption in human behavior will cause the cycle to repeat itself again.

I agree with the genre being somehow anthemic to this world downfall, a theme being addressed by several artists since the genre's inception. I definitely feel way more inclined to listen and write Black Metal when experiencing these dark times, both for the history of humanity, and the history of thought.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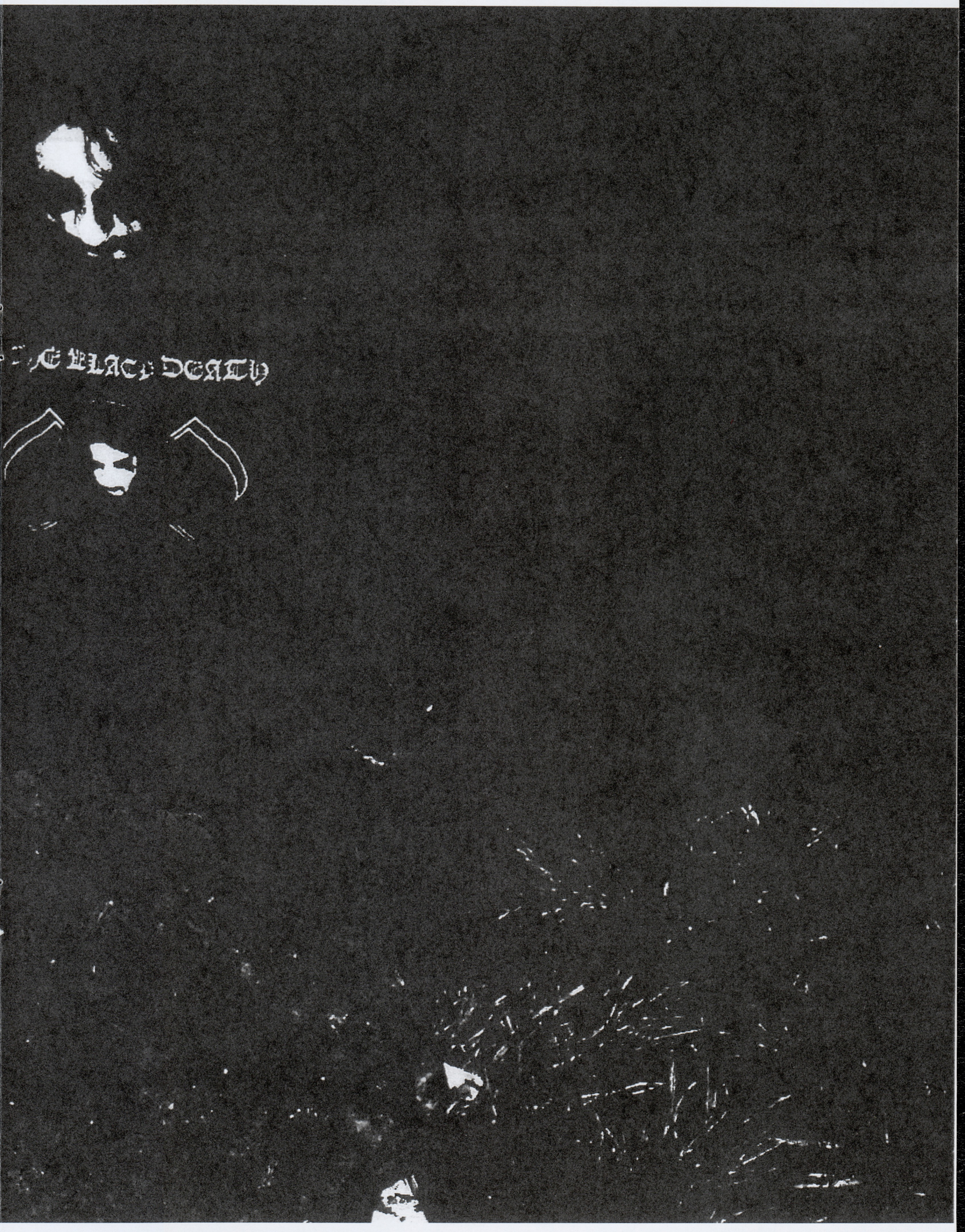

THE BLACK DEATH

NE- Suncharíot are one of the shining lights in the USBM underground. Unapologetic in your approach and message, you have paved a path for almost a decade now with the project, and your ideology has only strengthened. If you can cast your memory back to the inception of the project, what was the initial idea behind Suncharíot? Where did the inspiration spring from?

SC- Well there was a few obvious inspirations, specifically BBH but mainly SVETOVID and LASCOWIEC. Once, VJC and I started working on SVETOVID "Valhallan Dreams"(at the same time, VJC was also working on LASCOWIEC "Unbroken Spirit"), I was strongly inspired to also do my own project of similar style, well close/similar in some ways but it took me awhile to get good enough at programming and production, for it to actually sound good. But creating something with a heavy influence of BBH, as a solo project was my main beginning inspiration.

NE- You do not restrict yourself to Black Metal projects I see. When did you first discover BM and what was the initial appeal for yourself? What were the bands and labels that spoke to you the most strongly?

SC- Well BURZUM, XASTHUR, LEVIATHAN, SATANIC WARMASTER, ILDJARN, BILSKIRNIR, NORDREICH, ABSURD, DEATHSPELL OMEGA, CLANDESTINE BLAZE all kind of stand out as my first Black Metal CDs and also first big influences. Well actually I used to listen to grind, death metal, and other stoner metal stuff before, but once I heard XASTHUR then BURZUM, that changed everything for me.

As far as other genres of music, when I started BOL I did more noise stuff with COSMIC BREATH and another project D.M., which was with the solo artist behind SIRIUS, one of the projects COSMIC BREATH did a split with early on.

NE- Llyr is the first BM band I can find information on regarding your involvement. Do the ideas presented in Llyr differ greatly from Suncharíot or are there areas of crossover between the two?

SC- Well LLYR and SUNCHARIOT have the same initial interests/focus, but LLYR has a heavier influence of Depression but also Pagan/nature influenced. SUNCHARIOT has some Paganism/mythological themes, nature, but also Pride, and some NS philosophy. Sound-wise, LLYR is a more mid-tempo project, while SUNCHARIOT is a fast sharp attack, and lately both have become keyboard heavy, specifically LLYR, in "Revolution Tides", which keyboards are the main instrument for some of the songs and new SUNCHARIOT material, also using keyboard often.

NE- You are active in a number of other projects also. What does Suncharíot offer you that these other projects don't? When writing material do you actively write for a particular band or release or is it more organic and you allow the music to evolve first before deciding which project it is best suited for?

SC- Yes I am in a few projects currently. Really I would consider most of my projects to still be active, HAAR is the only one that is officially dead. And yes, when writing material for any of my projects, I am always writing with an idea in my mind, or general focus. Each project I play in has a different approach, so I write and record each one in a slightly different way. Generally I write riffs for a song, then start putting them down, then continue to write and continually go back and forth between writing and recording

until I have the final sound I like, for whatever project I am working on. Lyrics are always written separately and not really taken into account as far as the song structure, compared to a pop band that might write a song with the lyrics of a chorus being the first piece they have. I try to keep it simple, otherwise every song I write could be for one band but with a million different styles/approachs, I like to have each album/each project stick to one cohesive style and attack, it just makes more sense to me. The projects I am currently active with are SUNCHARIOT, SVETOVID, PANZERJAGER, LLYR, SURT, COSMIC BREATH(on hold) and ASHEN HUSK.

NE- Did your Brotherhood of Light label start around the same time as Suncharіot? BHOL has been a vessel primarily for your own projects, was there a reason for that initially? More control over the projects for example?

SC- Yes I started Brotherhood of Light Recordings around the time I started SUNCHARIOT, which was right after I had started SVETOVID with VJC, in 2009. I made the label so I could put out my own projects, SUNCHARIOT, SURT, and any future projects. It has now evolved into a label/distro, that puts out releases almost once a month. And I enjoy doing the label, it is a simple way to promote my own Black Metal but also Black Metal in general, and not the mainstream "Black Metal" but the true underground Black Metal.

NE- BOL and the related bands are heavily associated with the NS ideology. Black Metal has a long tradition of National Socialistic views, you could argue that it is as ingrained into the very fabric of BM as Satanism is. When did you first encounter this way of thought and was it something that instantly made sense/appealed to you? For some it is instantaneous, where others may find they are initially repulsed by it due to societies standards and a sheep like mentality yet the more they investigate it the more it resonates within them.

SC- NS Ideology is obviously a big topic (for some) and for me growing up in the Bay Area, I have been around a lot of people who didn't agree with NS ideology and anything related but that had little effect on me. So at first, I always enjoyed all the NS projects I started listening to, but didn't completely absorb everything that is NS. Eventually through life's trials and tribulations I came to agree strongly with NS ideology/philosophy. One could say that the NS ideals that are Black Metal staples, are simple, Hate/War for/with the Modern World: specifically the power of Religion and the power of the Rich to control the known world with Media as informational weapon, and a general dream for everything to return to a simpler time, when Nature was the only True Power. This is my general feeling and how I utilize NS themes in my music.

NE- The NS ideology is a large part of your work. There is of course many differing aspects of this ideology, it isn't as simple as denouncing all non-whites and then carrying on with your regular life. It is a discipline, a way of life, you need to almost re-wire your way of thinking and looking at things. I am curious about the roadblocks and setbacks you faced initially, what challenges did you face when starting out BHOL and your bands?

SC- Well there has been a few roadblocks, but there is almost always a work around. I have had trouble with a certain manufacturing company that makes vinyl, CD's, and pro-tapes. I made an order for 100 pro-dubbed tapes with cases, so to clarify, I didn't order any covers to be printed or any imprint design, so the company only had the name of the band and the name of my label, which ended up being all they needed to cancel my pro-tape order. They said that my label currently, or has in the past, used "Nazi imagery", which I think is ridiculous because if anything I feel like BOL has much "tamer" art then other labels, but either way they lost money by not doing the order but most importantly not getting more business from me.

The second time this happened, was with PayPal/Venmo. They decided that since the BOL web store sells some "questionable material" that PayPal could not be associated with, so I was kicked off but they still fucking bother me with invoices when I cannot even send money anywhere. That definitely made it a little harder for some time to receive and send money.

NE- Has your own ideological stance shifted over time? Have you found yourself becoming more (or less) accommodating to modern life as your knowledge/individual strength grew?

SC- Actually my ideology has grown mainly because of the general state of the world but also my own preference for life to be simpler, and with technology in everything/everywhere, it makes it hard to keep things simple sometimes.

NE- How has this impacted your daily existence outside of BM/the underground? We are in a climate of call out culture with others hellbent on doxxing people publicly when they find those who hold differing belief structures to theirs. Have you experienced such difficulties and if so, how have you dealt with it?

SC- I have an interesting relationship with the Bay Area. I grew up here and I love most of it for different reasons but in general I prefer to not be on social media which, without, kind of separates me from the hyper social aspects of really anything, but definately Black Metal. And I like it like this.

NE- I think the largest fallacy I encounter is that everything is black and white, and that there is no grey area. For example, you may read a book promoting NS ideology and you may not necessarily agree with it all, however there are certain elements which do resonate within you, and that you can absorb into the way you approach your own life. For me, this is creating an individual stance, a personal view of the world, and I can't see how that can be deemed as anything other than healthy and positive? To assume people are a caricature based on their minimal understanding and exposure to a particular frame of mind or lifestyle feels embarrassingly ignorant. How did you go about educating yourself over the years? You obviously need to self-educate yourself for a lot of this, what have you found to be the most vital and important books/websites etc for this education?

SC- So as far as books promoting NS ideologies, the classic example and my favorite, would be "The Turner Diaries" by William Luther Pierce. Some other books that I like and draw influence from are "Song of the Vikings" by Nancy Marie Brown and "The Coming Race" by Edward Bulwer. I have also always thoroughly enjoyed H.P. Lovecraft, specifically "At the Mountains of Madness", but really all his stuff is great.

NE- Black Metal (and Powerelectronics as well) has a long history of bands utilizing Nazi imagery for purely shock value. When these bands or artists are challenged, they go on to say it was only for an artistic exploration or other such similar tripe. Your projects however are quite restrained in your artwork, and I find that is often the case with the more serious bands, they rely on a deeper understanding beyond shock tactics. What are your feelings towards people using imagery they have no understanding of, and how did you develop your own individual aesthetic over the years?

SC- So In the past I have used such imagery and sometimes it is fitting but I do think that just using those symbols without some sort of theme/story line or reason, means less than a band that maybe includes some of those images but also gives the listener lyrics along with art, and of course sound that all together intertwines the ideas they wish to embody and promote or support. One thing I will say about creating art and design for tapes, CD, and vinyl, it is one of my favorite things to do.

I think it is important for album art to match, so to speak, with the lyrics and music. Kind of like each segment works in concert with each other to compose the whole product, so it is essential that each part has everything it needs, otherwise the full story cannot be told.

NE- Do you find this way of life isolating at all? Or is that the point?

SC- Yes, extremely isolating. But part of that is by my own planning. For the last 4-5 years, or so I have been living at this newer apartment in the Bay Area, where I spend all of my time. Generally I only leave for Doctor Appointments, post office, grocery, and to see my family. I don't go the bar anymore and I don't socialize. And yes a big part of that is Covid but before Covid I was already a hermit anyway. I would say after years of unruly drunk and fucked up adventures, in the last few years, I guess since after I turned 30, I have preferred to just work on music and my label, a little art, eating really well, and generally working on a simpler way of life, which I found, makes me happy.

NE- There is something to be said for Sunchariots approach to music, you have maintained a very single-minded approach across your discography. Drawn out painful passages drenched in raw decrepitude that offers something more to the listener only if they pay attention, remain devoted. There is evolution there, but it is minimal. How would you describe the musical approach of Sunchariot?

SC- Thanks man. Um well, I used to have a little different approach like when I made "Swirling Sunwheel of Everlasting Life", "The Path of Desolation", "Songs of the Past Form Beyond" and "Bone Harvester", and that style would include many many guitar tracks, what I now consider way too many. Also, I would make the mistake of not making the drums loud enough very often. Some of my newest material, the upcoming split with HADAK URA, is a little different in the way that it has a more

bass heavy(I got a new bass before this) sound and also I added keyboards in a different way than I had in the past, I had mostly used them for just intros and outros but since then, I started using them in the main songs.

NE- Is there a particular Sunchariot recording that exemplifies everything that you wanted to achieve with the band the most effectively?

SC- Well I won't be able to tell you, because I am so picky and I have reasons for not liking every album. I guess I would say that my best material is to come. SUNCHARIOT is currently finishing material for split with EINSATZGRUPPEN, the music is all done and I have enlisted a new vocalist to do the lead vocals(probably a shock but I thought another member would improve the process, and it has). So those vocals are being finished, and I just started working on newer material, for what will be another upcoming split, which I will leave the other band's name unsaid for now, for the surprise effect.

NE- For many, Lascowiec was an essential band in the discovery of BHOL. Their "Asgard Mysteries" CD can be considered as a gateway album for many I think, it introduced me to that sound which in turn opened up to Blazebirth Hall and beyond. I actually don't know if there is even any correlation between Lascowiec and Sunchariot beyond the split you shared? Can you shed any light on that project and the importance it may hold to yourself or the general US style it helped form?

SC- Very much so. LASCOWIEC started as two guys, both my friends since around the beginning of high school. They had started LASCOWIEC already before I started LLYR. They were recording digitally, and I did LLYR on Tascam four tracks. In 2006, VJC of LASCOWIEC and I started working on stuff together and he ended up mixing and recording the first LLYR demo. Then I continued with LLYR by myself for a little but then a few years later, VJC and I started up again, but this time we were playing together. And in 2008-2009, VJC and I (CRG) started SVETOVID. Then in 2010 or so, we released tape versions of LASCOWIEC "Unbroken Spirit" and SVETOVID "Valhallan Dreams", both at the same time. At around the same time, I started SUNCHARIOT, SURT, and Brotherhood of Light Recordings. And since then we made alot of music. Was LASCOWIEC a big influence on me? Of course! I fucking love LASCOWIEC, VJC is a virtuoso, and everything he puts his mind to becomes something amazing. And together we make awesome music too. SVETOVID has a split 7" inch in the making, and hopefully some more material to put out for late 2021.

NE- It feels like we are in a very dangerous climate right now. Surrounded by financial distress, it will take very little to set off a chain of events that are damaging to existence. We have seen it already escalate recently. The media seems to feed this unrest willingly, coaxing the small minded into action. Social media can dish out stories with no factual basis and in turn events can spiral out of control. It is said that you can approach the media in three ways- believe everything you see blindly, distrust everything you see without question or dissect what you are told and decide for yourself what you think and how you will react. That was written prior to WWII mind you, but I think the general premise still applies. How do you source your daily news and keep up to date with the goings on in the world? It feels like a dangerous terrain to navigate.

SC- Honestly, I don't really keep up with the news, I don't have a TV. I mostly hear stuff from my family or read the top of the newspaper when I am at the grocery store. So, this might not be the best question for me, since people will probably think I am an isolated hermit idiot or whatever. I do care what is happening, but I guess also being in the midst of the COVID virus and the rest of California, north of me, having horrible forest fires(I think that only recently slowed down), I am kind of distracted by that.

NE- To the world as a whole, the US looks to be in a mess. We are led to believe that your leader is an egomaniacal buffoon who is unfit to organize a game of bingo let alone an entire country. When I talk to Americans the story sounds a bit different and I wonder how much of the story we are actually being told. How do you see the USA right now, socially, economically, ideologically and politically? Do you hold much hope for a bright future, what needs to be done to secure such an outcome do you think?

SC- So as of right now, I don't know what to think. After Biden was elected, it has now become evident that in my own state, California there has at least 2 people arrested for voter fraud, one of them sent in at least 8,000 fraudulent voter registration applications. I guess in general, I of course hope for a bright future, but with these 2 as our possible leaders, I am not super happy with what could happen.

OLDOWAN GASH

NE-Its clear from the onset that your new album "Hubris Unchained" won't sit comfortably alongside the plethora of other underground BM albums vomiting forth in the year 2020. Its thoughtful, muscular and proud and has well written and defined songs. Can you tell us about the process behind the formation of "Hubris Unchained"?

FS: Thanks. "Having songs" has always been a very concrete goal of mine, even from the very beginning, and it's something I focused on a lot with "Hubris Unchained." I think my biggest focus was trying to find a balance between spending as much time as possible on the material without overthinking anything. Being very meticulous about the riffs and the structure, yet being loose enough to allow whatever was happening to happen. Additionally, being able to work with a session drummer allowed me to be much more adventurous than I had been on the earlier material. Some of the riffs and ideas predate the first tape but simply were too fast for me to play drums to, and therefor couldn't be used.

Ultimately I wanted to make something that felt like an album, not just a handful of songs thrown together. And I want to make something more muscular and extreme than the first two releases, without losing the identity of the first material.

NE-Recently I devoured the Cirrhus back catalogue and it dawned on me that there are bands within the underground who legitimately work and polish their craft. It feels like BM circa 2020 has largely morphed into an immediate form of people improvising their work and indiscriminately releasing every passing movement they have. Oldowan Gash defies this, and in our conversation over the past year it is clear that you worked hard on this new album. How do you balance the energy and passion of spontaneity with the meticulous nature of attempting to harness perfection?

FS: Well, I do feel somewhat motivated to "stand out" among many of those bands, but mostly I think that I just derive a lot of pleasure and satisfaction from spending time working out some of the minute details. But, of course you worded it perfectly, it is the balance between spontaneity and being meticulous that must be harnessed. For me I try to listen to my instincts and have patience. I might write a riff in less than a minute and spend the next 6 months trying to decide what should come after it. Same goes for everything with the band I guess. Oldowan Gash should be nothing more than an extension of myself, I don't need to second guess what is happening nor do I need to try to force anything.

Cirrhus are definitely a band I think very highly of and have drawn a lot of influence from, I've been following them since the 2008 Demo. I really admire their process and think they really have mastered the balance of spontaneity and meticulousness that we talked about above.

It's interesting to see newer bands try to maximalize their exposure right out of the gate by pumping out as many releases and pressings on every label under the sun. It's strange now because nearly everyone does this. It's really become quite predictable.

NE-Musically are there influences found on "Hubris Unchained" that didn't exist on your previous tapes? What are the projects that stood out to you and can you find a clear point of similarity amongst those bands that influence you and how it seeps into your work?

FS: Some of the stuff I was spending a lot of time with when writing and recording "Hubris Unchained"- Rostorchester, Scald (Russia), Evil (Brazil), The Chasm, Sorhin, Cultus, Rotting Christ (Triarchy of Lost Lovers in particular), Mutiilation, Sacriphyx, Graveland (Dawn of Iron Blades rerecording, Impaler's Wolves and Celtic Winter), Bilirubin (and more from CW prod), Devorator, some later Bathory, Bilskirnir and probably lots more. Basically, a nice mix of my long time favorites and some more recent discoveries that really spoke to me.

I mentioned this in another interview, but Sorhin & The Chasm had really become downright obsessions of mine in the time between "Maidens Tower" and "Hubris…" Even though they are very different bands, I feel very influenced by the way they arrange their songs, they sound so busy yet so fresh and concise. I think those two bands might make up for any kind of change of influence between the early EPs and the LP, but I don't think the change of influence was significant. The big difference of course is the session drummer and some more attention paid to riffs and song structure.

As for the stuff that makes an impression on me, it's hard to articulate why or how. "I know it when I see it" I guess. I try to make Black Metal music that has a real feeling to it, so I think I'm mostly drawn to the records that make me feel something.

NE-USBM feels to be on the rise again. Do you think with all of the current turmoil your home soil is undergoing that USBM is becoming more potent and relevant again?

FS: No.

NE-The imagery found on "Hubris Unchained" feels very deliberate and meaningful. It isn't the typical imagery often portrayed. It offers the listener yet another point of contemplation which adds a layer to the overall impact. What relevance does the chosen imagery have to the message or essence of the album?

FS: Well I wanted to make sure that I wouldn't be lumped in with all of the black & white candelabra-core bands that are a dime a dozen these days. I always envisioned that the first Oldowan Gash album would have a renaissance or rococo painting for the album cover. That's the kind of art I really love and I feel like it works well with extreme metal. Album covers like "None So Vile" from Cryptopsy made a big impact me in high school. And I have always thought stuff like "Soulblight" by Obtained Enslavement, or even the GBK stuff just looked so classy. The painting is "The Education of Achilles" by Donato Creti. It shows Chiron, a centaur who is depicted in the constellation of Sagittarius, training Achilles in archery. I stumbled upon the painting one day while reading about Chiron and immediately knew that I wanted it to be the cover of "Hubris Unchained."

NE-You also print your lyrics in the booklet, a trait largely overlooked these days leading me to wonder if bands have nothing left to say? Your lyrics are somewhat obtuse but could also be taken at literal face value, and applied to modern scenarios. There is a philosophical nature to them, and BM has long held a tight bond with certain philosophers, can you elaborate on the lyric writing process and if it comes naturally to you or must you deliberately pour over it before you are satisfied?

FS: I usually dread writing lyrics. I think this is because I sometimes try to force it when then inspiration is not there. The lyrics that I have written and actually ended up using for Oldowan Gash have come to me rather quickly and easily, often stopping dead in my tracks to pen it down when I am struck with an idea. I've learned to never try and write my lyrics anymore. The best results come when the time is right, and I just need to be ready to commit them to paper when they come. Actually, I feel pretty similarly when it comes to song ideas on the guitar, riffs or whatever else.

As for the lyrics themselves, I guess I try to write about very concrete ideas with a choice of language that seems like it could be applied to many things. For example, when I write about a "fortress" I might be referring to an office building of a tech company, or a university campus, or something else like that. I also write a lot about nature, this can be taken both literally and figuratively. "Nature" for me can often just be a concept that represents the antithesis of society.

NE-You were meant to play a show in July 2020 that was ultimately destroyed by current events. Can you talk about the live performance process, and what importance it plays to the band and yourself? Oldowan Gash is a solo project, I am curious about the level of commitment you require from the people enlisted to help execute your vision, have you found this difficult?

FS: The live band I was working with previously recently fell apart due to various reasons. I actually have no idea what I will do in the future, to be quite honest. But for now there are no shows and I'm not going to concern myself with it. I would very much like to perform many of the songs from "Hubris Unchained" live, but in all likelihood it will be a very long time before there are live shows where I live and I need to focus on the new material I am working on.

NE-"Hubris Unchained" was released by the legendary Drakkar, yet I notice it is listed on the CD as "USA Division", is this the first release from the US Division of the label? How does this division differ from the French league of the label?

FS: "Hubris Unchained" is the first release from the new Drakkar USA division. Drakkar USA is run by long time members of the USBM scene, names which would be familiar to most, and they work directly with Noktu and his team in France. Drakkar USA is something like a sublabel which will release USBM bands as well as do US pressings of certain Drakkar titles. That is all I can say at this point as it's all just beginning. I'm sure once the label has released a half dozen titles or so it might have a more defined identity and a defined relationship to Drakkar in France. What's important to know is that "Hubris Unchained" and future Drakkar USA titles can always be found at Klaxon mailorder in the US and from Drakkar in Europe.

Shane Church was an active participant in the mid 00's BM scene, known then as "Lurker", his work in bands such as Toil and Crooked Necks helped shape my view of what BM could be. I reached out to him regarding this time. This is what he had to say in response.

NE- I am curious about the early to mid-2000's period of BM, when I look at the release date of some of my favorite BM albums, a lot of them were released in 2007. You were a pretty integral figure at that point, playing drums in so many fucking bands, and also doing some of your own bands….did you consider yourself as a drummer who branched out into other stuff (as I think you are listed as BM drummer on discogs or metal archives,) or were you always interested in being a more solitary figure in BM? Playing more of the instruments yourself??

SC-My first "serious" instrument, outside of playing brass and percussion in various incarnations of band studies during my school years, were the drums. So that's where I began. Although, I instantly realized that I tended to gravitate more towards the guitar, once I started studying it instead of drums. For whatever reason, it's always felt like my main instrument of choice. So I've never really identified primarily as a drummer, but rather as a guitarist. I've always had a drive to be a multi-instrumentalist, so I've spent (varying degrees of) time with different instruments. I'm pretty much a loner in most aspects of my life, and have grown up and lived in pretty insular areas which has driven me since early on to become efficient enough on the required instruments in order to be able to do everything myself and not have a need to rely on others. So, the short answer to your question is that I've always been driven to be a solitary figure, playing all of the instruments, rather than just a drummer. As my time spent in BM led to more connections, and BM being notorious (especially during the earlier days) for a lack of drummers, leading most to use drum machines, I started getting a lot of offers to help out with projects, primarily as a "session" drummer for someone else's project/ideas, but sometimes becoming a member of a band as the drummer. It was more out of necessity and not really what I was interested in doing. Before long, I was participating in more "session" work than focusing on my own projects, which led to burnout, and also having my playing appear on releases that had ideologies that I didn't agree with whatsoever, and that I felt misrepresented myself, not to mention totally ashamed in some instances. These two factors played heavily into my decision to drop out of the scene altogether. That and an overall lack of interest in the genre in general.

NE- Out of all the bands you were involved in which ones do you think reflected your vision most accurately? Which bands do you wish you did more with, and are there any that you wish did less?

SC-Out of the bands I did myself, that wasn't "session" work, it would definitely be Crooked Necks. Although, by that time, I didn't even consider what I was doing to be associated directly with my BM works. I suppose if we were to just focus on BM stuff, it would probably be

Toil. I wish I had focused on my own work more, in general, as opposed to the stuff I did for other people/projects. I regret spending so much of my time on other's bands rather than my own. There are definitely bands that I wish I had not been a part of at all whatsoever. Ones in which I blindly supplied drum tracks for, without any reference, which was very common for a lot of the stuff I did "session" work for, which led to me being unhappy with the bands overall, and left me feeling misrepresented. There was one release in particular that I supplied drums for, before knowing how they would be used, that I was totally pissed about when I found out. Immediately told the guy whose project it was, that I wanted no part in what he was doing and to remove me from everything. So basically, supplying drum tracks without having any knowledge of the end product was a major mistake. I just didn't think about things like that, which I chalk up to naivete.

NE-Was Blasphemous Crucifixion your first solo BM band?

SC-No, Toil was actually my first attempt at creating BM solo. All of the other solo projects of mine came after.

NE- Are there any bands which you were in that you haven't been acknowledged for, maybe private bands or ones where line ups weren't listed? I heard about Perversion with Antihuman and the Enecare guy, I found Morgue Fornicator the other week too, are there other projects like that?

SC-Yes, there are a ton of them. Myself and a couple of guys that I was playing in various projects at one point started a private label (C.O.S.C.; Cult of the Southern Cross) and circle of projects, which ended up linking with a private circle of Finnish artists. There were over 50 tapes, between probably 30 different projects (some solo projects from each of us, but also various group projects as well) or so, that were limited to 10 copies each (including our 3 artist copies). The majority of these projects never had a "public" release, only private issues. Although, some projects of mine had private and public releases. Such as Old Oak, Blasphemous Crucifixion and a few others. There are also a few projects that surfaced using already released drum tracks of mine, or manipulated drums tracks that already existed, etc.. Morgue Fornicator was one such project. Ed/Antihuman contacted me after I had already left the scene and was like "I just released this Morgue Fornicator CDR using, and speeding up, old drum tracks of yours...here's the release!" So, like I mentioned earlier, a lot of stuff that I appear on, I had no active part in or any involvement in. It just seems strange to me to be on these releases that were out of my hands or being done without my knowledge or active participation. Dan from Vrolok did that a few times too. Using pre-existing drum tracks for Sangraal and Interfektor, as well as multiple Vrolok releases.

NE- What about Gravestench….where you in that?

SC- Yes, I was the drummer. Ed/Antihuman asked me to supply drums for a project he had ideas for, which ended up being Gravestench.

NE-Fuck, do you yourself have a comprehensive list of all the stuff you did?

SC- Hahah, nah...it would be nice though. I really should've kept track, as I'm now reminded of projects from time-to-time that I participated in which haven't crossed my mind in ages.

NE- Wraith was from Australia and quite a big part of underground Aus BM, how did you meet him? And did you ever travel to Australia? how did this collaboration work (if you weren't in Aus, did he go to USA or was it all done through mail/email?)

SC-I met Adrian/Wraith through connections in the scene. As for who introduced us, I honestly can't recall. Back in those days, I spent a lot of time on MSN messenger, as did several people involved in BM. It was an ideal way for chatting with people doing the same thing as yourself, albeit spread-out in different areas and countries. Adrian/Wraith and I got to know one another via chatting online. I was a total fanboy of Nazxul, as they were one of the first BM projects that I became heavily obsessed with in the early days. He and I hit it off right away, as we both had a ton of influences outside of BM. At one point, I asked him to contribute synth, as well as become an "official" member of Toil and Frail (pre-Crooked Necks), and he kindly accepted. He in turn asked me to participate in Nox Inferi. All of our collaborations were done via mail/email. Even though we spoke over the phone a few times, sent written correspondence to one another, we've still to this day never met. He and I still keep in touch. He's actually shown quite a bit of interest in my "experimental/noise" projects and has even ventured into dabbling a bit with those forms of expression himself.

NE- Was playing live a big part of BM back then? What were the shows like?

SC- Not at all. To this day, I have never performed live with any of my BM projects. Only with projects before and after my time spent doing BM. I was of the mindset back then that BM shouldn't be performed live. Plus, the area in which I've lived the past several years has nowhere to perform something like that live, and no audience for it.

NE- Old Oak was I guess Dungeon Synth before Dungeon Synth was co-opted and the next big thing to repress via boutique imprints…..What was the inspiration for that? Was it a learning curve working out how to execute the sounds you wanted?

SC- Old Oak came about in a spontaneous manner. As I mentioned before, I've always had an innate desire to experiment and move past activities that start to feel stagnant, which is what led me to start Old Oak. As you said, Dungeon Synth wasn't even a thing then, so I had no real point of reference beyond just what felt/sounded right to me. I suppose Mortiis was already doing his solo thing at the time, but I was oblivious to it. I started doing stuff in that direction as a desire to try something different than 'traditional' BM, while still focusing on dark/sombre soundscapes. It all came about rather naturally as well. I hooked up an old, shitty, Casio keyboard that was left in my studio by a friend, ran it through a cheap (Zoom) multi-efx processor and voila, Old Oak was born. Super-simple setup, nothing to it really. But no, no real learning curve with that project.

NE- I read somewhere that Toil was your death worship band, one where you really focused on the manifestations of death and explored all of its aspects. You also said that you felt that you were haunted by a small child around that time. I know that stuff might be difficult to talk about, but I am intrigued more on this? Do you still feel haunted? Did that worshipping on death feeling fade over time, or maybe it adjusted naturally, or is it still there in all its glory?

SC-Yeah, once I fully realized the vision I had for Toil, after muddling around a bit near the beginning/first demo, I locked into the theme of "death worship", and that's how I saw the project for the rest of it's lifespan. The haunting was real, no doubt. That same spirit would announce itself, when attempting to make contact with the supernatural over and over again, which led to it's admission that it was following me, and that it was the spirit of a young(er) male. Not sure why it began "haunting" me in the first place, but it professed that it was. It was never anything that caused major disruptions in my life, but it's presence tended to be fairly obvious. All of that has faded over time, and I can't say that I feel "haunted" anymore. I no longer attempt to communicate with spirits, so it's absence could have something to do with that, or it could just be gone. Either way, I can't say I still feel it's presence at all. The death worshiping aspect of things were tied to the central themes of Toil, as a project, so when that project died, so did any aspect of that aesthetic. I no longer focus on themes such as that, although to deny the existence of death is to deny the ultimate counterpart to life. It just doesn't influence or play a part in anything I create these days, and hasn't for quite some time now.

NE- Did you have influences personally? I have started to notice certain projects where the members seem to be influenced by themselves largely, opposed to external influences. They don't actively pay attention to BM yet still perform BM themselves, so the influences become more about how "they" think "they" should play and is often limited only by their ability. How did influences impact your bands back then?

SC- Oh, yeah...for sure. I'm such a "fan" of a huge wealth of music that it's been virtually inevitable for me to avoid influences. My main goal has always been to attempt to create something as unique and personal as possible, but at the same time, I've never had a problem wearing my influences on my sleeve. I think being influenced by other acts isn't a problem, unless it becomes more about mimicking or recreating someone else's ideas or sounds over the desire to create something that stands in it's own space. It's a really great thing, in my opinion, when you can be influenced by yourself and your own works, hence creating your own universe in a way. That's the most conducive way to yield truly personal results and to avoid being derivative. I could likely point to a set of influences for everything/every genre I've ever created music in, although the point has always been to let them serve as just that, influences, and not a blueprint or some sort of guideline to base your approach on. I've always been a bit too obsessed with individuality in my life to want to replicate anything else. Back when I started doing BM, my influences were the

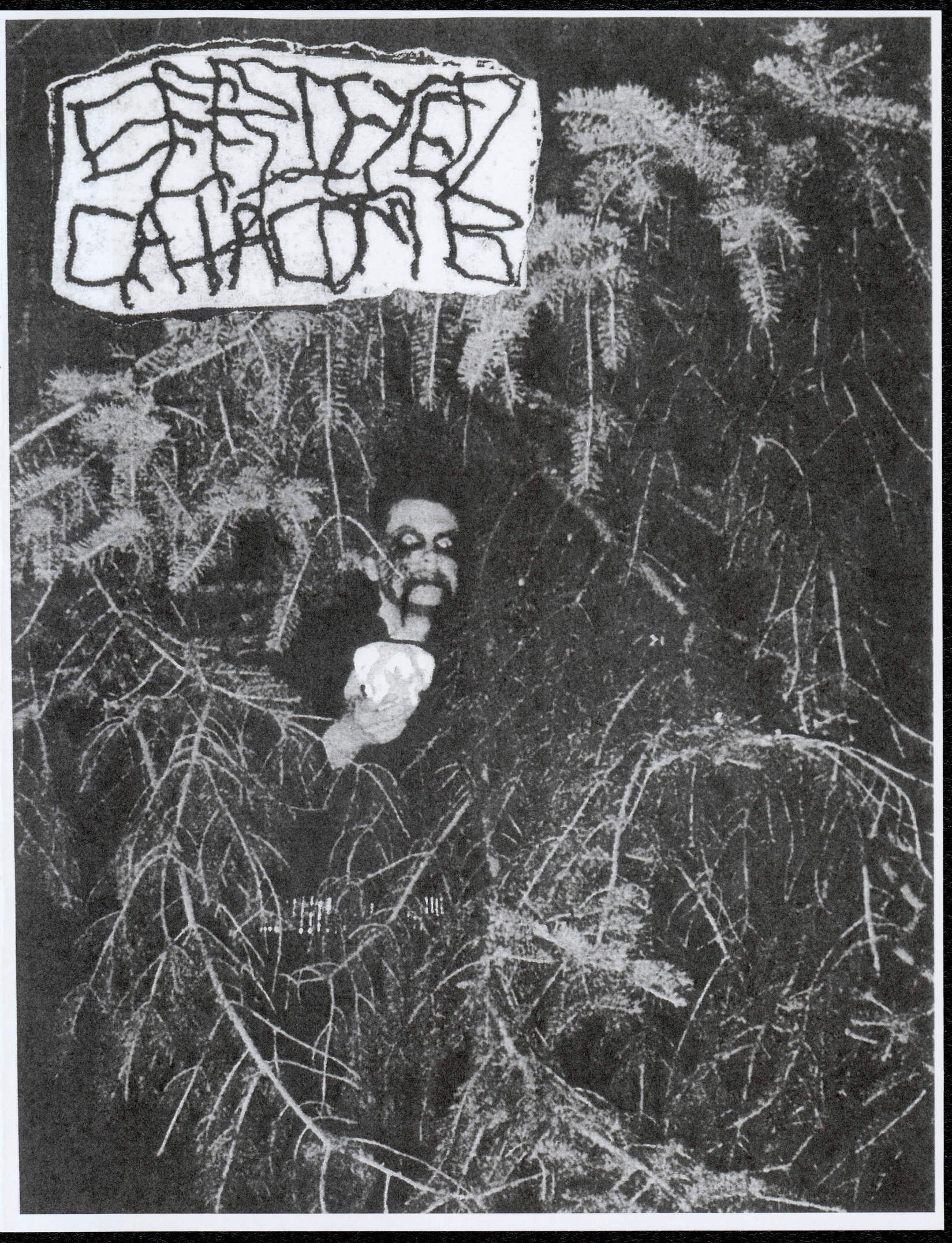
same as most, I would think. The early "classics" from the second wave: Darkthrone, Burzum, etc., as well as more obscure stuff (at least at the time) like Black Legions output, in addition to bands like Nazxul, Beherit, Ildjarn were definitely influences for me, as well as a slew of others. As time went on, being someone who always had a ton of outside influences, separate from the "scene", I started really appreciating acts that were pushing things. Stuff like Lugubrum, Ved Buens Ende (which I still get down with), and anything that was being weird or breaking the traditional mold, became my main focus.

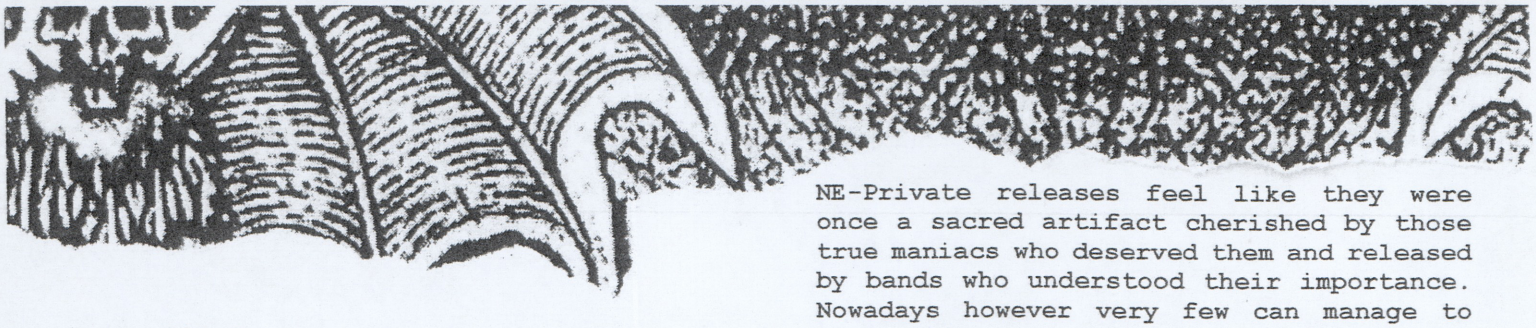
NE- Toil (and Crooked Necks) acknowledged bands far beyond BM with Joy Division, Cure and U2 covers. Did you always listen to that music or was it something that you discovered around that time when covering them?

SC- Yeah, I was always a fan of stuff from other genres, possibly moreso than BM, since I had already spent several years of my life being obsessed with music before even discovering the BM scene. BM was definitely my main focus for a while, but those outside interests never waned or became less important to me during that time. My earliest memories of my life are centered around music. It's been everything to me since a very early age. My tastes are all over the place, admittedly. I was well aware of how "uncool" a lot of those influences were to most involved in the scene, especially during those days when it was much more of an unknown/underground thing, which is what led me to incorporate those influences into the BM stuff I was doing at the time. I wanted to attempt to create something new, or open some unseen doors that most hadn't even thought about doing. Not to say I was trailblazing or anything, but it certainly was a conscious decision to break down some expectations, and sort of push away from the orthodox nature of the scene. I always admired the tradition and never dismissed it, but was absolutely not content just wearing that formula out.

NE- Is it safe to say you basically left BM behind? I know you do Powerelectronics and noise stuff now, was there a clear decision made to do this? Was there something about BM that stopped appealing to you, something it was doing to you? Maybe the people in it? Or the themes or whatever? Did you feel any sense of guilt or anything as you evolved away from it all? Were any of your old buddies bummed out on your shift? I listen to all sorts of music across the underground, coming up through Death Metal and Punk and HC, I have done all those bands and PE projects and BM etc etc, I don't think I prescribe to one way of thought, so if I kinda disappeared it would be no big deal to anyone, and I probably wouldn't even notice. You were Lurker…..and that in a way carried something with it, did the Lurker persona die? Did you have to kill it if so?

SC- Oh, yeah...I definitely left BM behind. Not out of disrespect or dismissal of the scene or anything, it just happened naturally, simple as that. I just found myself drifting away...and have continued to drift in the opposite direction. I haven't created, or listened to anything Metal-related, BM or otherwise, in close to 15yrs, and have no desire to, if I'm being honest with you. Moving into the Noise/Experimental scene also happened naturally. During the end of my time in the BM scene, I started experimenting with Noise/PE recordings and found myself highly inspired and more free to explore avenues in a genre that has very little boundaries. I think I started feeling confined with BM and wanted to break out. It came to a point where I was bummed when I had an "obligation" to record BM, or supply someone else's project with drum tracks or something, but was always stoked to work on anything Noise-related. Once I realized this, it was clear to me that my BM work wasn't fulfilling me as an artist anymore, so it was a logical decision to cease those activities. I was also really fed-up with being in a scene which had certain themes that I never agreed with whatsoever. There was zero guilt involved on my behalf, in fact, I felt relieved to leave the scene, to be honest. I didn't want to be affiliated with a lot of the stuff going on, so it felt good to leave it behind. A couple of my friends from those days, Wraith/Adrian is one of them, were bummed that I left everything behind, but understood my choice to do so. Adrian even recently asked me if I could ever see myself doing BM again, and I told him that I honestly have no desire to do so. It feels very much a part of my past and not a part of my present or future. The Lurker persona is definitely gone. I suppose I did kill it off, but it happened by killing off that part of my life in general. As someone who appreciates those past works of mine, I'm sure this is all pretty disheartening to hear, but I'm just being honest. It really means a lot that you value those projects/recordings and lets me know that it wasn't all for nothing, which is nice to have that validation. And again, I'm happy to discuss the stuff, but it's certainly all in the past for me.





NE-Eerified Catacomb is a mysterious entity, operating in the shadows and vomiting forth only the most putrid examples of BM. First up, is the name some sort of bastardised homage to the Forbidden Citadel of Spirits release "Eerified Catatomb"? FCOS does sound partially influential to your sound, do those sex offenders releases hold a special place in your tape collection?

EC- Of course it is. I discovered the Mons Veneris/FCOS split on a blogspot in 2013 while I was crippled and on a lot of morphine. Both projects have been painfully carved into my mind since. My collection of FCOS is too little considering the amount I've listened but I'm not about to put my money in the hands of some parasitic cunt.

NE-Raw BM is seemingly at its peak right now, with a multitude of worthless/useless bands shitting out throwaway release after throwaway release. Eerified Catacomb can get lumped into this scene by the mindless drones looking for the next "rare" tape to show off to their "friends". The truth is, Eerified Catacomb transcends such drivel in not only sonic ear fuckery but also primeval intent, how do you see the current state of BM, and Eerified Catacomb's place within its maggot infested corpse?

EC- Black metal is not something you cosplay as. Majority of these "bands" need to learn this. There is a true ethos to be followed and those too stupid to understand that are plain to see. It's fucking embarrassing. I refuse to promote the vast majority of my output via social media and very much respect any other contemporaries who resign themselves to obscurity by choice. Any retard who was listening to Youth Crew and got into Revenge a year ago can start up a bandcamp page. A fantastic way of being able to tell a worthless poser from someone who might know what they're doing is the overuse of the already horribly beaten into the ground term "kvlt" or labeling their music vampyric. (A few exceptions to this of course, which I will not list to maintain their dignity) Either way, just shut the fuck up. E.C is the best I can do to reject all of this. Eerified Catacomb's place in Black Metal's maggot infested corpse is in the foulest darkest bowel, chewing on the gallbladder and masturbating.

NE-Private releases feel like they were once a sacred artifact cherished by those true maniacs who deserved them and released by bands who understood their importance. Nowadays however very few can manage to keep their mouths shut on both sides, with bands needing endless praise for meager works and "fans" needing their dick sucked for being in "the know". What is the point of private releases in an age of fucking showoffs do you think?

EC- Private releases are crucial in my opinion to bolstering the secretive and devoted aspects of Black Metal. Without these tenets, the cult aspect is completely devoid. The point of private releases in an age of showoffs is maintaining the strength in hatred of even those who deem themselves away from the flock. What difference is there between a Black Metal fan who constantly gloats online about their newest records from an annoying indie rock/punk loser who rejoices constantly about virtue and their new dime a dozen demo? Almost nothing. Private releases help cull the herd, a herd that seems to be consistently growing. With that growth the true devotion, dementia and sardonic wrath in Black Metal becomes diluted. Kill them all.

NE-Corpse paint is a traditional aspect of BM that is constantly shit upon by those who have "outgrown" it (which is short for losing their balls). There is nothing like a miserable corpse paint image to encapsulate the disgusting death like rattle of BM. You have mastered the art of corpse paint, what is its importance in BM do you think? and what are these intellectual pussies who have outgrown it missing/forgetting?

EC- Corpse paint is essential. Not always, but more than often. Anyone who has "outgrown" corpse paint but insists on continuing to make Black Metal should re-evaluate what the fuck they're doing. You're not smart for deeming certain activities more "mature". The greatest early Black Metal demos were all made by deranged teenagers with no regard for music or imagery beyond that of their most twisted and autistic fantasies. To dispose of corpse paint in favor of some cleaner image you must be a jaded old bitch. I respect those who refuse to ever display images of themselves in any of their releases a lot as well, but I certainly favor the corpse painted figure lurking somewhere and always will.

NE-Is all BM devoted to Satan? Is Satan a necessary master to behold before worthy BM can be created?

EC- Absolutely not. The strongest devotion one must have in Black Metal is to themself. We have a saying. Satanas Solum Initium Est. Satan is only the beginning. Your personal gods, idols and fantasy are the truest ruler of your universe. Eerified Catacomb worships Necrophilia, Earthbound spirits, the suicides and deaths of those I once knew, chaos magick, sexual depravity and the combination of amphetamines and psychedelic drugs. A decent signifier of a truly "satanic" band (extremely rare and even if they really are devoted they still might be insufferable as fuck) is if they identify with specific generals/commanders of legions of hell or especially if they base their themes off of information you can't just find on Wikipedia.. Even then, its often still too easy. Here's looking at the new wave of shit bandcamp bands popping up.

NE-How about politics? You could argue that as Burzum was a Nazi, then BM is as devoted to National Socialism as it is Satan, as it was instrumental in the genesis of BM as we know it. Politics and race feel like a very touchy subject and only the most devoted and maniacal come out and make a clear stance on either side, are you man enough to lay your cards on the table?

EC- Politics in Black Metal are typically a death sentence. I couldn't care less. North American nationalism is largely retarded. So is performative social justice that gets championed by shit brained liberals but doesn't scratch the surface. Both "sides" of the political coin are corrupt, its all a game to those ruling over us. Why would I care about fighting for "my" nation or race or social class when all of the above are comprised of people who don't give a fuck about me. That coin needs to be melted down, turned to a thumb knife and shoved deep into the throats of those in power. All financial and religious elites need to be exterminated. What happens after that is none of my business. Majority of the left wing think I'm too extreme and the right wing call me a degenerate and a faggot. Fuck em.

NE-How many offers of Vinyl edition represses of your tapes have you been offered to date?

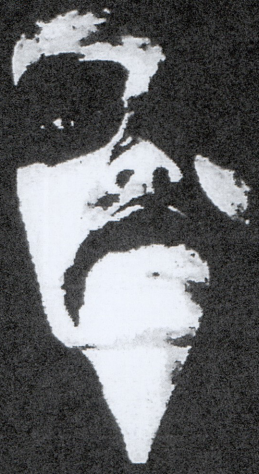
EC- Too many. If we're not already in contact, fuck off.

NE-BM feels like the perfect soundtrack to the misery 2020 has wrought upon our pathetic heads. What has been your putrid soundtrack as people dropped dead around you and buildings burnt to the ground by angry vicious mobs?

EC- Dying Fullmoon, Empire Of Hate, Circle Of Ouroborus, Enshroud, Demonic Hordes, Puritas Virginum (ESPECIALLY the later techno infused shit), Nefaria, Skalder, Nosvrolok, Obsidian Forest, Necrostrigis, Unlight, Ifernach, Starcave, Hand Of Glory, Forbidden Temple, Decrepitude, Mysteries, Lil Grim, Kurgan, Azhubham Haani, Til Det Bergens Skyggene, Kill The Kristians, Dj Sound, Malkuth, Forbidden Citadel Of Spirits.

NE-There is an LP of yours coming out on the elite Winterreich Records, what can we expect from this slab of festering cobwebs?

EC- More of the same. The inspirations for this release were deeply personal. No bullshit. Absolutely no compromises.



NE- Nocturnal Emissions welcomes The Seer, the shadowy figure responsible for numerous BM entities residing in the dank Australian Underground.

Can you start simply? When did you discover BM and what was its initial appeal? Was it more from a listener's perspective to start with, or did you delve right into your own projects early on?

THE SEER- I discovered Black Metal around 12-13 years ago when I stumbled across bands like Ulver. I remember the feeling of knowing I would never stumble across another type of music. From that point, I've always been a listener, but only recently started creating music as of early 2019.

NE-What was the reasoning behind doing solo projects? BM has a long lineage of solo projects and often it is due to the incompatibility of others with the persons vision, or the lack of appropriate people. I am curious the motivations behind your endeavors?

THE SEER- At the outset, solo music writing was purely because I didn't have many contacts living close-by that would be able to reliably contribute other instruments. Plus, I've always found working alone with respect to music allowed me to keep my ideas cohesive and organised. As I've kept going with it, I've found that working alone has given me complete control over any deadlines and saves the stress of contending with other bandmembers' visions for the music.

NE-Have you played in bands with others? What do you see as the advantages/disadvantages?

THE SEER- I have played in bands with others, but I am often hesitant to do so unless I know the person or am familiar with their music. Most of my interactions with other band members has been through them providing session drums on various bands. I am, however, part of several two-piece bands.

While working with other people adds the benefit of their vision and their technical skills, I think that too many people (or the wrong person) can cloud the vision of the music.

NE-What projects are you publicly responsible for?

THE SEER- The projects I am behind include Lament in Winter's Night, Vrörsaath, Pissmoon, Solipsism, Autumn's Rapture, Midnight Betrothed, and a few others.

NE-Often, the difference between projects is minimal to the listener, but quite obvious to the artist responsible. Its not uncommon for bands to change stylistically between releases thus eliminating the need for numerous projects. What is the motivation for different projects, what does one provide that the other can't?

THE SEER- The main point distinguishing my projects, at least in my own mind, is theme and inspiration. While the projects themselves may evolve stylistically, the project itself will always originate from the same inspiration and idea, and that permanently separates each project for me.

NE-Do you see all your project as one large body of work, or should they be experienced individually? Do you expect that if someone likes one project you do them they will like the others?

THE SEER- Personally, I perceive all of my projects as one large body of work; however, I think that somebody liking one project of mine does not necessarily mean they will like another. As I've said, each project has really embodied a different aspect of Black Metal that I resonate with: people will inevitably favor some styles over others, or dislike certain styles outright.

NE-Raw BM is reaching critical mass right now, with so many one-off projects, side projects and re-issues of demo tapes on vinyl etc all flooding the underground. There is a general apathy creeping in from the consumers, I know I feel it, are you conscious at all of simply adding more fuel to this fire? Do you try and differentiate yourself, or is being part of the landscape the goal?

THE SEER- I couldn't agree more - the "Raw Black Metal" underground is currently over-saturated, and the bubble will soon burst. Now, more so than ever before, are one-off projects and demos seeing vinyl issues. I think there has always been something entrancing about obscure tape demos never seeing the light of day with respect to vinyl; I think that sense of mystery risks being lost if things keep going the way they are now. My goal has never been to comprise part of the general landscape, or to be associated with any other "movement" or "scene"; my intention is to make music that survives the current impulsive obsession with "Raw Black

Metal" and is appreciated after this whole thing collapses.

NE-What are the primary influences for yourself? It feels like this current wave of Raw BM is influenced by the more modern era of BM, and finds little interest in the older pioneers of the genre, I find that intriguing, so where I got into BM through Emperor and Dark Throne, people are now getting into it through Lampir and Sanguine Relic. I am not saying this is right or wrong, cause who am I to judge? Who do you look to for guidance and inspiration?

THE SEER- I would agree that most modern fans of this genre appreciate music mostly created in recent years. I have no problem with this - but it is also valuable to trace the lineage of this type of music to its beginnings; not because of appreciating its origins, more just because it's great music. I think it would be a shame if one's understanding and appreciation of this genre was totally confined to music released within the last 10 years.

Personally, I look to the older bands both stylistically and musically for inspiration. People like to think that we inhabit a different context to those first bands; I tend to disagree - I think that the motivations and passions that informed early Black Metal are more present today than ever.

NE-People tend to think BM nowadays lacks the deeper, occult meaning that the older bands exhibited. Times have changed, and in turn some belief systems now seem outdated or irrelevant, what does The Seer stand for? What are you overarching themes across your overall approach to art?

THE SEER- I do not see any of the originating themes of Black Metal as irrelevant or outdated at all. For me, these themes of the occult are interwoven into Black Metal and inseparable. That being said, my lyrical themes have always focused on themes such as nature and darkness. These are the themes that initially attracted me to Black Metal when I first discovered it.

NE-We are in a political quagmire it seems, and BM has a long standing adherence to the more intolerant side of political leanings, some believe politics has no place in BM and is purely devoted to Satan, others hold a more open mind to what is tolerated. Where do you stand? Do politics hold any place in any of your projects?

THE SEER- I think that anyone who confines their interest in Black Metal to purely one lyrical or musical theme doesn't appreciate the music on its merits at all. For me, Black Metal can embody a topic, or none at all. In some cases, the intolerance behind the artist's themes can add fury and power to the music. In other cases, the ambiguity of its theme (or lack thereof) can add an element of mystery and obscurity to the music.

It solely depends on the artist.

While Satanic themes have definitely been pronounced (and arguably over-saturated) in recent decades, there are still some artists who manage to embody a ferocity while using a very popular theme. On the other hand, there are many artists who abide by what is conventional and are instantly forgettable. Theme will not save a talentless band, but it may help to elevate an already talented band's music.

With regard to my own projects, none are necessarily political but have contained lyrics about apathy, hatred and humanity.

Personally, I'd prefer not to keep my lyrical themes bound to worldly matters; that being said, I'm not one to judge people who do.

NE-For me BM represents hate, hate for oneself, hate for others and a deep-rooted despising of all you encounter. It can help you deal with such feelings, and for others it exacerbates such feelings. It becomes like a functioning alcoholic, it can cripple you or it can simply exist in an underlying, malevolent way. How do you deal with the ever-creeping misery that is unfolding before you? Does BM offer some solace to these times?

THE SEER- I can definitely agree with that description. Even prior to this current pandemic predicament, my lifestyle was quite isolated. This environment of isolation allowed my hatred and disgust to be concentrated into motivation for creating music. It allows me to quell it, but also channel into something more precise. Even before I was creating this music, it has always offered me some solace in the face of constant hatred; I don't expect that that will ever change.

NE-Australia has an ever growing underground BM scene, but has always seemingly followed in the footsteps of the Americans or Europeans, beyond those originators such as Sad Ex and Bestial Warlust who sound purely Australian, what do you think defines the Australian sound

and feel for BM? How are we differentiating ourselves from our overseas counterparts, or is it all part of one massive scene regardless of locale?

THE SEER- I think the diversity of the genre really makes tying down a uniquely 'Australian' sound quite difficult. Given the geographically separated nature of Australia, we have ample opportunity to create characteristic and isolated music (e.g. Tyrants of the Southern Lands). That being said, I'd say there is yet to be a distinct 'Australian' sound for this particular genre. I do eagerly anticipate it though.

NE-Does The Seer offer a side of your personality a chance to come out when required, such as when performing music etc, or is it always there lurking in the background? I often wonder about the dualism of people who give their BM personality a title that isn't their regular name. I know it is a time honored tradition, such as corpse paint, and it gives the music an inhuman element which it requires, I am just curious how you come upon such a title, at what stage does The Seer rear its face, when was it conjured up to represent your BM expressions?

THE SEER- In my opinion, a large shortcoming of modern Black Metal is the artist's obsession with social recognition. This is an antisocial genre of music, and it should have nothing to do with individual gratification. The label 'The Seer', as you say, was an attempt to display an inhuman face when creating this music, something unable to be contaminated by ego. The title itself holds no significant meaning except for an admission of the clarity one holds when accepting hatred as the only truth.

NE-Do live performances hold any interest to you?

THE SEER- Not necessarily - that being said, I wouldn't decline the opportunity should it arise. I could only ever see the reality of a Pissmoon or Lament in Winter's Night concert happening though.

It would not be a regular occurrence and probably just a one-off performance.

NE-You run the Atrocity Altar label. What was the reason for starting your own imprint? Is there a overall aesthetic you want to achieve with the label, how do you go about finding bands or are they all your own projects?

THE SEER- The label was an effort to create a single outpost for all of my projects. I also didn't want to entrust labels and individuals with my music when they were bound to eventually misconstrue its vision. Instead, I could create a label where I have control over all of my projects, and each release is strengthened by the consistency of the others.

With respect to the aesthetic, I wouldn't say the label has an overall 'look'; however, I do appreciate the value of effort being put into inlay designs and inserts. I think these things are often overlooked and really provide a great opportunity for the listener to gain greater insight into the context and atmosphere of the music.

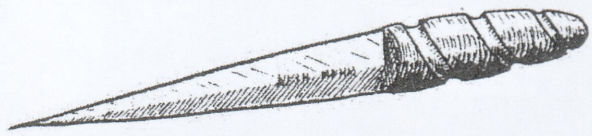
The label has always been mostly my own projects with some releases from other individuals. I would rarely accept a submission unless I knew the individually, or unless I had a strong admiration for the individual's work. However, in the coming months, the label will re-release some demos from other artists that have until recently been lost to the early-mid 2000s.

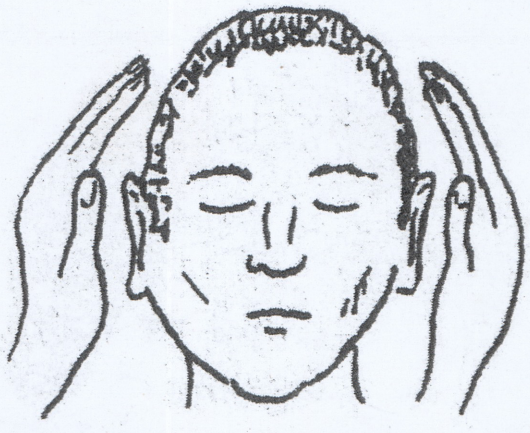
NE-Have you found any challenges operating a label out of Australia?

THE SEER- Yes, shipping prices abroad are exorbitant, and this has only been made more chaotic recently due to the pandemic. As you would know too, sourcing materials such as blank cassettes and mail/packing materials is more difficult.

NE-Do you have plans for other projects beyond the ones you already do? Do you have any desire to play music beyond the BM/Ambient strain? (Death Metal/ Electronics etc?)

THE SEER- I definitely anticipate on creating new Black Metal and ambient projects. Both of these genres are already incredible expansive, and I think that leads a lot of room for experimentation (for instance, I've always wanted to create a project inspired by Neptune Towers etc.) However, for the time being, I can't see myself participating in anything like death metal/power electronics etc.





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